In Search of HEALERS

A Study on Cycles of Violence, Collective Trauma and Strategies for Healing and Peacebuilding in Kenya
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Dedication

To all our children and future generations who have a right to inherit:

a blessed land and nation;
where justice shall always be their shield and defender; and
where they shall dwell in unity, peace and liberty.
“At a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized — at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who think differently than we do — it’s important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we are talking with each other in a way that heals, not a way that wounds.”

Barack Hussein Obama
President of the United States of America
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Words</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerning Cycles of Violence in Kenya</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Trauma: African Perspectives</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards Breaking the Cycles of Violence</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 6</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Lieu of a Conclusion</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) is pleased to share with you the results of the study on trauma healing and breaking cycles of violence that began in 2008. For a very long time, many agencies have struggled to link the healing of collective trauma to their peacebuilding and development work. The following paragraphs provide a modest response to this critical question in our theory and practice.

The study affirms the need for trauma healing at all levels of society. COPA has been involved in community based trauma healing in Mount Elgon, Eldoret and other parts of Kenya. This study affirms some of the work COPA is already doing, more importantly, raises new theoretical and practical questions for the community of peace and development workers.

COPA considers the production of this book as a ‘work in progress.’ As the researchers acknowledge, there is need for continuing reflection and research. In this regard, please do not hesitate to share with us any feedback and comments you may have on the report.

We are pleased to acknowledge the support provided by our partners, PACT Inc. and PACT Kenya in the process and production of this book. We also thank our team of researchers led by Babu Ayindo for completing this onerous task.

Read well and let the reflection and dialogue continue.

Erick Oyugi
Ag. Coordinator, Coalition for Peace in Africa
Executive Summary

This study was commissioned by the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) in 2008. The scope of the study included comprehending the apparent cycles of violence in Kenya, conceptualizing the nature of collective trauma, and outlining strategies and actions for healing, peacebuilding and conflict transformation.1 The study began in September 2008 and was concluded in September 2010 with a series of workshops to validate the key findings in select locations wherefrom the core primary data was collected.

The key findings of the study include:

- As noted by other studies, for instance the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Post Election Violence (CIPEV)2 and the research by the Kenya Thabiti Task Force 20083, the institutionalization of violence in Kenya began in earnest even before political independence in 1963. The destructive violence in 2007/8 was only symptomatic of that process of structural violence embedded in all levels of society. Majority of the respondents in this study were emphatic that the post-election violence is “only a small part of the story, like the yellow leaves of a plant.”

- Ethnic and clan differences that, historically, have not been contestable political issues have metamorphosed into a key driving factor of violence in Kenya’s political culture. The colonial problem of the ‘settler’ and the ‘native’ has mutated in a post-colonial political problem of the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. As the Waki report aptly noted, problems

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1 In this study, the working definitions of peacebuilding and conflict transformation are adopted from Action for Conflict Transformation. In this regard, peacebuilding is defined as undertaking programs designed to address the root causes of conflicts and grievances of the past and promote long term stability and justice while conflict transformation means the process that addresses the wider social and political sources of a conflict and seeks to transform the negative energy of war into positive social and political change.

2 The report is popularly known as the ‘Waki’ report, the name of the chair of the commission, Justice Phillip Waki. In this study we shall reference the report by this popular name.

of inequality and marginalization are often viewed through ethno-geographic lenses even though the inequalities between individuals of the same ethnic affiliation are sometimes more pronounced than that between different ethnic groups!⁴

- Alex Kamwaria,⁵ a researcher and lecturer at Tangaza College Nairobi, holds the view that upwards of 80% of the Kenyan population is traumatized. In his view, Kenyans have undergone what he terms as ‘psycho-social degeneration’ that has resulted in a loss of trust and faith in themselves and the systems of governance. This large mass of people, according to Kamwaria, is driven more by ‘survival guilt,’ and a sense of helplessness. In his view, the post-election violence (PEV) was nothing but a symptom of this state of societal ‘ill-health.’

- A most disturbing feature of the PEV⁶ is the attendant sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). Anecdotal evidence indicates that the level of SGBV has considerably increased even after PEV stopped. Curiously, most of the SGBV violence is now happening within the same ethnic group. It is our view that current patterns and trends of SGBV seem to be heavily under-theorized. Indeed, our study shows that SGBV is not just an attack against the girl or woman as is widely assumed; emerging literature indicates that the aim of rape and other forms of sexual violence are deliberately calculated to destroy what some authors have termed as the ‘life force’ of a community.

- An equally under-theorized element of political violence is the question of male disempowerment. Several respondents lamented the need for a return to responsible parenthood in general and responsible fatherhood in particular. At the heart of some of the violence is an ever increasing sense of disempowerment by

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⁴ Republic of Kenya, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV), 33
⁵ Interview, 12 September 2008
⁶ We use the term post-election violence only because it has wide acceptance. However, we share Pheroze Norworjee’s argument that the term PEV masks important constitutional and governance issues regarding the fact and circumstances of post 27 December 2007 poll. In fact, Norwojee sees the use of the phrase as a “carefully cultivated word play” that could mislead us into peripheral and proximate causes of the violence. “The correct appellation that we must use,” Norwojee suggests “is ‘post-voting violence’ (PVV). See Nowrojee, “Let’s Get Election Fraudsters Too” (Nairobi: The Star, Wednesday, 11 November 2009) 18
boys and men in society. Anzetse Were\textsuperscript{7} is persuasive that being the most disempowered in the world, African (or black) men are finding it easier to respond to the disempowerment through acts of violence against people close to them but whom they consider as ‘weaker.’

- One of the terms of reference for this study was to generate information and knowledge that would form a basis for civil society engagement and advocacy with the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC). At the commencement of the study, the legislation to form the TJRC was in the processes of being translated into a parliamentary bill. Our evidence is that while formal processes can enhance healing and peacebuilding they may, at the same time, bear potential for stifling organic processes of healing and peacebuilding.

In spite of, or perhaps even because of, its current challenges, civil society needs to continue engaging with the TJRC because – as an institution and a process – it still provides opportunities for historical accountability and breaking the cycles of violence and impunity. As Sammy Chemwei, a religious leader and peace worker noted, issues surrounding the credibility of the chair should not distract us from a sacrosanct process of addressing historical pains and injustices.\textsuperscript{8}

The key recommendations of this study for civil society actors and organizations include:

1. **Debunking the myth of ethnicity.** Successive political regimes have succeeded in making ethnicism\textsuperscript{9} the defining factor in Kenya’s political culture yet, historically, people of African descent, including those in Kenya have easily related across ethnic or clan divides. The Zimbabwean poet Chenjarai Hove once noted that people do not build a nation by destroying the villages. Hove lamented that the newly independent nation-states were emphasizing ‘national unity’ while encouraging people to feel insecure regarding their ethnic identity. And, once people

\textsuperscript{7} Anzetse Were, *Drivers of Violence: Male Disempowerment in the African Context* (Nairobi, Mvule Africa, 2008)

\textsuperscript{8} Phone Interview 27 May 2010

\textsuperscript{9} In the study, we deliberately make a distinction between the terms ethnicity and ethnicism. Like individuality, ethnicity cannot be negative. What should concern us is ethnicism (note the ism) which, like individualism, denotes acting with a sense of superiority, entitlement, privilege, advantages, etc, on the grounds of belonging a certain ethnic group or ancestry. In this regard, the popular usage of the term ‘negative ethnicity’ is an oxymoron
feel insecure in their ethnic identity, as many elderly respondents noted, they are unable to meaningfully encounter other identities. Fear becomes the important determinant in their relationships with people who are different from them. In other words, we can only feel secure as Kenyans when we are secure in our ethnic identities.

With perhaps the most robust civil society in the region, Kenya can, and should, take the lead in debunking the myth of ethnicity as the political problem. The driving factors of corruption, unresponsive governance, wanton poverty, amongst other key national problems, do not reside in ethnic differences as the political class and the media seem to have engineered majority of the people to believe.

2. **Healing is not a “soft option”?** In patriarchal societies, there exists a tendency to view trauma healing as a soft option, with little or no space in real politik. Even within civil society trauma healing is seen as a “soft option” best left to religious leaders and faith-based organizations. Yet, as this study shows, unhealed trauma is the heart of the cycles of violence Kenya continues to experience at all levels of society.

World Vision is one of the few agencies that have crafted a framework that places trauma healing at its rightful place in the quest to create independent, empowered and sustainable individuals and communities. As Kantowitz and Riak demonstrate, “peacebuilding, trauma healing, and development and the practices associated with them inherently overlap because they share a set of fundamental core values: meeting basic human needs, promoting human rights, and eliminating structural and over-violence.”

3. **Supporting organic healing processes.** In the course of the study, it was evident that communities have found ways to ‘move on.’ Some of these strategies have included community dialogues and joint development projects like in the areas of Kapteldon/Yamumbi in Eldoret and in Burnt Forest. Government and CSOs initiatives need to tap into and support such processes. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

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need to resist the temptation of assuming that nothing is happening in the process of healing. A recent study on Transitional Justice in Africa being concluded by Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-A) and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) observes that some top-down processes of healing and reconciliation through Truth and Reconciliation Commissions tend to interfere and stifle organic community based healing and reconciliation initiatives.

4. **Healing is a process not a project.** Related to the question of supporting organic initiatives is the dominant approach where CSOs seem to be in a hurry to ‘bring people together’ with the mistaken assumption that when ‘people come together’ claims for impact of their work would be more pronounced. While there are cases where it was productive to bring people together in ‘reconciliation’ meetings, the findings of this study suggest that CSOs would rather invest more in intra-ethnic healing and dialogues. It is not an exaggeration that while civil society and government agencies have adopted the grammar of reconciliation, this has not been matched with the long term commitment and investment required for building genuine understanding and dialogue.

5. **Linking mental health work with collective trauma healing work.** The status of research in collective trauma healing shows that there are common grounds for linking the individualized approaches of mental health with collective trauma healing. After all, it does not help much in the long term to heal a single individual, while the collective and the institutions in which those individuals live and function retain their inherent violent and traumatizing nature.

More research, engagement and collective action are called for between seemingly incompatible approaches. Alfred Kibunja, a trained psychologist and peacebuilder, notes that there needs to be more dialogue and engagement between the fields of individualized mental health and collective trauma healing given the reality that one-on-one counseling is not sufficient in addressing the large mass of people who need healing. He feels that the short workshops being conducted on collective healing are hardly sufficient to address the deep pains; in fact, he observes that too little efforts could actually be counter-productive.
6. **Strengthening the institution of eldership.** Veteran journalist Mitch Odero and elder Major John Seii (current chair of the Kalenjin Council of Elders), amongst others, called for the redefinition and strengthening of the institution of eldership. While acknowledging that the institution had historically been mis-used, they nevertheless recommended that since elders continue to serve in spite of mal-functioning systems, civil society needs to support processes of revitalizing the institution of eldership.

7. **Restorative Approaches to Justice and Healing.** As Philip Ochieng', a peace worker with PeaceNet, posed: when we raise the voices of justice, are we prepared to temper it with an offer for mercy? The modern judicial systems tend to emphasize the technical definition of guilt and punishment. Yet African indigenous judicial systems emphasized personal and collective accountability when crime was committed.

In a January 1998 article comparing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (of South Africa) and the International Criminal Court (for Rwanda), Babu Ayindo\(^\text{11}\) raised the problematic questions regarding the quest for justice in the context of post-conflict reconstructions. Drawing from Howard Zehr’s seminal text *Changing Lenses*, the author raised several questions we need to consider when pursuing justice. These include: (a) is crime merely a violation of the state and its laws or is it essentially a violation of people and relationships?; (b) should justice focus on establishing guilt or should it focus on identifying needs and obligations?; (c) should we aim to mete out doses of pain as punishment to the guilty or should we aim to see things made right?; (d) should we seek justice through a conflict of adversaries in which the offender is pitted against the state or ought we encourage dialogue and mutual understanding giving victims and offenders central roles?; and (e) should the rules and intentions outweigh outcomes

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or should we judge the efficacy of our justice system by the extent to which responsibilities are assumed, needs are met and healing of individuals and relationships is encouraged?

8. **A regime of respect and inclusivity in political culture.** An enduring lamentation is the need for respect of all communities in their diversity in the manner the country conducts its politics and decision making. Several respondents were emphatic that, like neglected children, communities that feel denigrated and excluded would always find ways, that are not necessarily peaceful, to remind the rest of the country of their presence and space. The new constitution provides several opportunities to advance a regime of respect. That regime of respect needs to be promoted at all levels of society. The civil society and the media in Kenya are best placed to advance this quest.

9. **Focus on the children.** Many peace initiatives tend to heavily focus on adults. And even when they focus on children, there is a tendency to assume that children are small adults. Some respondents were particularly surprised by the level of ‘conflict illiteracy’ which the Ministry of Education dealt with the spate of violence in schools following the post-election violence. For the community the researchers interviewed the link between the violence culture of the adults and the violence mirrored through school violence was simple and clear yet the Ministry of Education began by blaming gadgets such as DSTVs for the rising violence in schools. It is critical that a special focus on children in peacebuilding and trauma healing be emphasized at home, in schools and in the wider community.

10. **Taking advantage of the new constitution.** The new constitution provides several opportunities for healing and rebuilding. Peace workers need to be constantly alive to the provisions and clauses that might generate conflict and proactively plan for programs to address these. In chapter ten on ‘Judicial Authority and Legal System’, for example, the constitution provides that “alternative
forms of dispute resolution including reconciliation, mediation, arbitration and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms shall be promoted, subject to clause (3).” The constitution also introduces a devolved and proportional representation format of elections that is more inclusive and representative than the First Past and the Post system that has been used in centralizing power on individuals. The chapter on Leadership and Integrity also provides a framework not just for public officers but also leadership systems in other levels of society.
First Words

Introduction

Commissioned by the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA), this study sought to understand cycles of violence in Kenya, conceptualize the nature of collective trauma, and outline strategies and actions for healing and peacebuilding in the country. To explore the important subject, three communities that have been at the vortex of Kenyan politics were purposefully chosen, namely the Agikuyu, Kalenjin and Jo Luo. Before we begin a substantive discussion on the study, we need to make three observations that may call for further research.

First, at a validation workshop marking the end of the end of the study, Paul Kaguima, a trained psychologist, asked us whether we had considered that during the entire study, we had opened people’s wounds that the research
process had no scope or capacity to heal. His question was obviously sparked by an intensely emotional narrative rendered by one of the participants during the validation workshop held in Kiambu County\(^\text{12}\) in September 2010. Looking back, we realize that, indeed, to a considerable degree, the two-year research process in trauma healing involved a considerable amount of opening of wounds. How can such a study – through Action Research, for instance – be conducted in a therapeutic manner? Indeed, the research process has also been a therapeutic, validating a rich culture of resilience for both the researchers and the people they interacted with.

Second, we note that there were constant new dynamics during the entire course of the study. When the data collection began, for instance, Kenya had just created a coalition government after the post-election violence. The levels of tensions, particularly in the counties of Nakuru, Eldoret and Kisumu were palpable. In some areas the body language was clear that some respondents in those counties were not prepared to discuss intimate issues touching on deep pain and trauma healing with researchers whose ethnic descent they were not sure about or were simply suspicious of. How does one combine traditional research methods with other fluid approaches of research?

Third, we noted that in intense moments during Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), groups would prefer to speak in African languages. It was only in Kisumu, that groups expressed themselves in English regardless of the emotional intensity of the issue being discussed. What does this suggest about the question of healing and African languages? Is the current linguicide\(^\text{13}\) in most parts of the world affecting individuals and communities capacity for resilience? Should research in peacebuilding be conducted more in African languages?

One of the challenges peace researchers usually confront is that, unlike other disciplines that also study conflict, peace researchers intentionally seek to present findings in a manner that galvanizes people to think of

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\(^{12}\) During the period of data collection, Counties had not been created as administrative units. By the time the findings were being validated, the new constitution had created counties. We have opted to use in order to update our data.

\(^{13}\) Linguicide generally refers to the decreased usage or death of a language. Particularly in urban settings, the use of indigenous African languages is considerably decreasing in Kenya.
possible creative nonviolent solutions. As the Norwegian Johan Galtung – considered the father of peace research – would put it, in peace research, we are not just satisfied in doing a diagnosis and prognosis; rather, peace researchers must be committed to providing a therapy.\(^\text{14}\)

Therefore, the manner we have elected to present the findings is inspired by this assumption in peace research. In the following paragraphs, we seek to challenge our assumptions and thinking on the question of cycles of violence and impunity, and hopefully raise some good questions for possible therapy.

### Specific objectives of the study

The specific objectives that guided the study as originally crafted include\(^\text{15}\):

- mapping cycles of violence in Kenya in order to deepen understanding on how unresolved trauma impacts on the current socio-political culture and inform scenarios for the future;
- enhancing awareness on peace building approaches to trauma healing and its relationship to mental health, conflict transformation and development;
  
  identifying and documenting successful community based healing initiatives and processes with a view to avail learning that may serve as a basis of an architecture of a National Healing Program;
- generating information and knowledge that will strengthen the approaches of relief, peace, human rights and development agencies; and
- generating information and knowledge that will form a basis for civil society engagement and advocacy with the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC)


\(^{15}\) Coalition for Peace in Africa, “Terms of Reference for Consultancy on Documentation of Trauma in Kenya” as revised on 3 September 2008
Research Methodology

There is a tendency in which researchers, even within the field of qualitative research, attempt to make their findings as objective as possible with wide generalizability. In addition, such studies also seek to be as representative as possible. This study does not pretend to do any of that.

The researchers conducted only 40 one-on-one interviews with individuals and only about 400 Kenyans attended the Focus Group Discussions held in Thika, Kiambu, Nakuru, Eldoret, Burnt Forest and Kisumu. This study is therefore not representative – in the strictest sense of the term – of the Agikuyu, Kalenjin and JoLuo peoples of Kenya. However, the researchers insist the voices of these ‘select Kenyans’ are valid and do provide a solid base for reflection, dialogue and action,\(^\text{16}\) in the full knowledge that this study is but a modest contribution in a more comprehensive search for possible strategies of breaking the cycles of violence in country.

The study employed a hybrid approach that combined Appreciative Inquiry and critical problem oriented research approaches. Our experience shows that the two approaches are not necessarily incompatible as is generally assumed. In their article, “Critical evaluation of Appreciative Inquiry: Bridging an Apparent Paradox” Suzanne Grant and Maria Humphries\(^\text{17}\) have demonstrated that both approaches can actually complement each other in practice. In other words, as we sought to understand the problem, we also sought to appreciate what works well and why.

Drawing from the scope of work, the lines of inquiry for the interviews were crafted in a flexible ‘respondent-centered’ manner allowing for conversation and reflection to flow during the one-on-one interviews and the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The following methods were used to collect data:

- Literature review on issues of cycles of violence, trauma in Kenya and Africa in general;

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\(^{16}\) See for example, Ernest Stringer, *Action Research: A handbook for Practitioners*. Delhi: Sage, 1995

• One-on-one interview with a purposeful sample of people involved in social change work. Some of the interviews were conducted via telephone;

• Focus Group Discussions with a purposeful sample of elders, women leaders, youth leaders, professional and religious leaders from three ethnic groups: Agikuyu, Kalenjin and JoLuo.

• Observation of a variety of situations in the process of data collection.

The bulk of the primary data was collected in September and October of 2008. However, the synthesis and analysis was done in September of 2010, two years later. It would be obvious that quite a number of issues related to the study had changed. Such issues are discussed in the relevant chapters.

Limitations of the Study

When the original interview guide was designed, the researchers had estimated that the five core questions for the one-on-one interview would take approximately 45 minutes, even with follow up clarifications and questions. The initial tests of interview guide indicated the same. However, on average each one-on-one interview took longer than an hour, some extended to two hours, as the researchers could simply not stop respondents from talking about the joys of belonging to a country called Kenya and the pains of dreams deferred. Again, though the researchers admittedly opened many wounds in the process of interviews, they also believe in the capacity for resilience that was very evident as people candidly and boldly shared their experiences.

Having anticipated the ethnic dynamic (or dilemma to be more specific), the researchers realized that even after assembling a diverse team of research assistants, there were occasions when it was clear that people simply hesitated to share information because the names of some researchers suggested that they belonged to the ‘wrong’ ethnic group at the time. For example, when facilitating the validation workshop in Thika, a participant told the Lead Researcher during tea break that “only two years ago, you would not have done this here.”
The original goal of the study was to “collect, document and avail information on the African understanding of trauma as a basis for developing homegrown healing mechanisms for victims of trauma.” As the study developed through literature review and interviews and taking cognizance of the dynamics and changes at socio-political level, it became more realistic to aim at understanding cycles of violence, conceptualizing collective trauma, and outlining strategies for healing and peacebuilding in Kenya.

Challenges encountered during the study

In the course of the undertaking the study, several changes were experienced that considerably altered the original approach. Some of the challenges include:

- Funding and resource mobilization. Initially, the study was designed in three phases: (a) data collection; (b) analysis, synthesis and writing; and (c) launching of the final document in key locations wherefrom primary data was collected. After the first phase, however, funding was not secured as expected thus affecting the momentum of the study given that the two key researchers were then functioning as independent consultants. By the time funding was secured for the second phase, fundamental shifts had taken place not just in the political terrain but also in the management of COPA as well as the composition of the research team.

- Related to the delays in securing funding was the fact that the majority of the respondents who attended the validation workshop were not the ones who were originally interviewed in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as envisioned. Except for Thika and Kiambu, the other validation workshops in Nakuru, Eldoret and Kisumu had a substantial amount of new respondents. One the one hand, it worked to the advantage of the study in the sense that another group validated what another set of people had said. On the other hand, it provided the lead researcher with volumes of new data to incorporate and update in a draft that was virtually ready for submission.

- There were instances in 2008 where the level of tension and distrust was so high that the research team took much longer to build confidence before embarking on the inquiry. With tight time frames for FGDs, the
As already noted, the subject of trauma healing evokes deep emotions. Whereas the research team had prepared for this, particularly at the time of pre-testing the research tools, some of the interviews and FGDs required more time than had been anticipated in letting the respondents speak through words and, more importantly speak through silence.

• The political processes within the framework of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act, particularly agenda 4\(^{18}\), galvanized several processes that raised tensions, provided opportunities for peace and raised new questions for the study.

The findings of this study are laid out in six chapters:

**Chapter One** provides a brief background to the study and describes the methodology used in the study as well as the challenges encountered in undertaking the study.

**Chapter two** attempts to make the cycles of violence in Kenya, in particular, the post-election violence “thinkable.” We argue that the waves and character of the violence bear a disturbing resemblance with the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The researchers heavily draw from Mahmood Mamdani’s *When Victims Become Killers*, to provide a conceptual container for the field data. It is our conclusion that if no intentional efforts are made to break the cycles of violence and impunity in Kenya, our evidence points to scenarios of potential violence that will not necessarily be tied to the election cycle.

**Chapter three** seeks to understand the nature of collective trauma in Kenya or more specifically the concepts of health and ill-health. As Alex

\(^{18}\) Under agenda four, the coalition government committed itself to: (a) Undertaking constitutional, legal and institutional reforms; (b) Undertaking land reforms; (c) Tackling poverty and inequality, and combating regional development imbalances; (d) Tackling unemployment, especially among the youth; (e) Consolidating national cohesion and unity; and (f) Addressing transparency, accountability and impunity.
Kamwaria\textsuperscript{19} has shown, the concepts of trauma are closely linked to socio-cultural beliefs and knowledge systems. The central thesis is that while the individual psychopathological approaches have their space in a modernizing context, particular attention needs to be given to extant notions of collective trauma and the appropriate therapeutic strategies for enhancing health that communities are already practicing and developing.

\textbf{Chapter four} focuses on the TJRC. When interviews were conducted in mid 2008 there was virtual unanimity that the country did not need a TJRC. When the researchers returned to conduct the validation workshops in September 2010, there was virtual unanimity that Kenya needed the truth, justice and reconciliation but not through a commission such as TJRC. Besides the credibility and legitimacy of the chair of the commission, there are deeper historical issues that explain the general rejection of commissions as an alternative to solving social-political illnesses.

Nevertheless, our findings suggest that civil society needs to continue engaging with the TJRC by supporting and linking the community based healing initiatives with the TJRC process; retaining a strong ‘watchdog’ role as is happening now; tracking the needs and recommendations by victims; and advocating for full implementation of the recommendations of the commission.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Chapter five} proposes several strategies for breaking the cycle of violence. Proposals focus more on what government agencies, religious institutions, civil society organizations, community based organizations and ordinary citizens can do to help in the breaking of the cycle of violence and healing of society. The chapter is inspired both by the lyrics of the first stanza of the national anthem of Kenya as well as the myriad moments in interviews when respondents spoke in ways that challenged themselves and their communities to introspect and take responsibility in seeking sustainable and interdependent solutions.

\textsuperscript{19} See Alex Kamwaria Psychotherapy and Spirituality in the African Context: The Case of Post-Conflict Healing Rituals Among the Dinka of Southern Sudan” (unpublished,

\textsuperscript{20} See the recent study on Transitional Justice in Africa being concluded by Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding.
Chapter six is a brief conclusion. It is clear that Kenya needs a new story. As Prof William Ury would put it, if the peoples of Kenya have to create “a mobilized community, acting systematically”\(^\text{21}\) then they have to be motivated by a new story. Fortunately, Kenyans have demonstrated during the study and in other places that they are capable of creating a new earth. We also have organizations such as COPA who are willing to risk breaking new ground in search for viable solutions to the state of ill-health that our nation is experiencing.

\(^{21}\) William Ury, “The Third Side”, 2000
Ever since the colonial period, the cycle of violence has been fed by a victim psychology on both sides. Every round of perpetrators has justified the use of violence as the only effective guarantee against being victimized again and again. For the un-reconciled victim of yesterday’s violence, the struggle continues.

— Mahmood Mamdani in *When Victims Become Killers*
Post-election violence in Kenya and the genocide in Rwanda: An Overview

The report of the Commission of Inquiry into Post Election Violence (CIPEV) noted that the violence in Kenya has formed part of the electoral processes since the re-introduction of multi-party politics in 1991. The report observed that the post-election violence was not only unprecedented – but was also part of an “episode in a trend of institutionalization of violence in Kenya over the years.” At the heart of this violence, the report concludes, is the cycle of impunity that must be broken. The trenchant report provides a solid platform for comprehending the violence, and the cycle of trauma it has built, as part of the Kenyan electoral cycle and political culture.

To make the violence in Kenya “thinkable” we find insights in a study on the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The nature, patterns and trends are troubling in their similarity. In When Victims Become Killers, Mahmood Mamdani identifies some features of the genocidal violence germane to a study of the violence in Kenya. We shall discuss six of these disturbing trends:

First, whether the post-election violence was planned or spontaneous, the atrocities were committed by a mass of people at the grassroots using crude weapons. Unlike other massacres in other parts of the world that involved a few people using sophisticated weapons and in most cases acting from a distance, in the post-election violence, we witness a large mass of people using crude weapons at close range and in total disregard to the traditional protocols of war as well as the International Humanitarian Law. The photographic data in Kenya Burning: Mgogoro Baada ya Uchaguzi 2007/8 captures this disturbing phenomenon. Like the genocide in Rwanda, we need to wonder how a mass of people in different parts of Kenya had the initiative and enthusiasm to commit such violence at close range.

The second disturbing ‘genocidal’ feature, expressed in almost all the FGDs, was that the perpetrators of the violence were very well known to

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24 GoDown Arts Center, Kenya Burning: Mgogoro Baada ya Uchaguzi 2007/8 (Nairobi, 2009)
the victims. Maybe that is even an understatement: the perpetrators were neighbors who, as one interviewee in Nakuru put it, “shared salt with each other.” What would drive neighbors who had grown up together for over 40 years to do that to each other? Why would neighbors whose children played and ate together resort to wanton violence? Was the disputed presidential election enough reason to justify such neighbor-on-neighbor violence?

The third disturbing feature is that the violence meted by the security forces seems to have targeted people from particular communities25. In Kisumu, some of the older persons who had witnessed other cycles of violence in Kisumu from the time of independence told the researchers that they were not surprised with the manner the security agencies reacted to the post-election violence. They asked us to consider the proposition that in Kenya, the ideology that drives the response of the government security agencies is that the only language that JoLuo and the Somali community26 understand is violence.

The fourth disturbing feature is that when the researchers traveled round the region collecting primary data as well as validating the preliminary findings, it is only once that we had people express remorse. In most cases, we heard narratives and myths that either justified the violence or provided rationale for revenge. Some of the religious leaders we interviewed in Nakuru and Eldoret even went to the extent of drawing biblical parallels to the violence in Kenya. Thus the trauma was redefined in a vicarious manner. In Nakuru, one of the respondents was blunt: “my trauma is that I had no opportunity to revenge. When I had organized myself to face the enemy, that’s when the General Service Unit (GSU) intervened. Why does the GSU only come after we have been beaten then prepared to defend ourselves?”27

25 We use the term ‘community’ here advisedly. Our view is that it is more accurate to speak of the Gikuyu nation or the Kalenjin nation of the Luo nation. It is also with trepidation that we use the term ‘ethnic’ as we realize that to a large degree it denotes backwardness. However, we have retained these terms in some sections because of their widespread usage and ease of understanding.

26 In another study in trauma, the Somali people spoke of being targets of state violence just because they were Somali. See Babu Ayindo Trauma Awareness and Healing in the Somali Cluster (Nairobi: PACT Kenya, 2010)

27 Focus Group Discussion, Nakuru 15 September 2008
The fifth and perhaps most disturbing feature is that the violence is fed by a narrative of victimhood. The three nations\(^{28}\) purposefully selected for this study viewed themselves as the ultimate victims, justified to retaliate by “any means necessary.” In other words, the most atrocious acts are justified in the name of self-defense or ‘just war.’ The sense of individual and collective responsibility and accountability was virtually non-existent in the dialogues and reflections.

The sixth issue touches on the question of Christianity and the role of the church. Going by the recent census results, over 70% of the Kenyan population profess the Christian faith. Yet, like Rwanda, violence took place even within churches or churches leaders were perceived as having done little or nothing to stop the violence, the ultimate calling of their faith.

These six features of PEV lead us to difficult questions: how can one explain the root causes of the violence? How can we make the violence ‘thinkable’ within the Kenyan context? Does the pattern of violence suggest a genocidal tendency? How do we respond as peace workers and/or potential healers? To grapple with these questions we need to explore the root causes of the violence.

In summary therefore, the direct violence – erroneously termed as tribal – witnessed during the PEV is only a small part of the narrative. Beneath the direct violence were structures and systems of governance that nurture direct violence or even make it virtually inevitable. In turn, structures and systems that engender violence are designed around certain beliefs, norms and values that justify violence and oppression. Kai Brand-Jacobsen notes that structural violence is difficult to recognize and understand as it is “built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world.” In other words, structures are designed to determine “the different allocation of goods, resources, opportunities, between different groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc, because of the structures governing their relationship.”\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\) We use the term nation - which we believe is more accurate as compared to community or ethnic group - to mean a people who share a common, language, ancestry or history. That means, for example, that the Luo nation could extend beyond the territorial borders of Kenya to include JoLuo in Uganda, Southern Sudan and Tanzania.

Underneath both direct violence and structural violence is the *problematic cultural violence*. Cultural violence has its roots in the core cultures and narratives, tapping into beliefs, fears, values, cosmologies, histories and ideologies that nourish both direct violence and structural violence. In other words, cultural violence is the “software” that provides frames of meaning around which structures are designed, which then makes direct violence virtually inevitable. Put differently, cultural violence refers to aspects of culture that makes violence acceptable, justifiable, and normal or even glorified.

Exploring the roots of the cycles of violence

To answer some of these troubling questions, we trace some of the patterns of violence to the colonial experience. Our intention is not to apportion blame but to illuminate and challenge our notions of contemporary violence in Kenya. Frantz Fanon\(^30\) provides a solid starting point in deepening our understanding on the nature, patterns and trends of violence in Africa in general and Kenya in particular.

**Frantz Fanon and the psychology of politics**

The colonial experience, according to Fanon produced millions of humans who had been skillfully infected with fear, inferiority complexes, superiority complexes, despair and debasement, amongst others. At a collective level, Aime Cesaire talked of “societies drained of their essence and life, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions mashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out.”\(^31\) The two authors show how the behavior of the African was conditioned by the violence and humiliation of the colonial settler. A sense of victimhood that pervades our lives to date was grafted from that relationship with the colonial settler in particular, and the relationship of Africans and white Europeans in general.

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30 See in particular Frantz Fanon Black Skin, White Masks, transl. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: New Grove Press, 1952); The Wretched of the Earth, transl. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Weidenfeld 1963)
In Kenya, like in many other post-colonial societies, little effort has been made at understanding, let alone seeking, to break the cycle of violence and victimhood. Yet, the problem is pervasive. It is well known that the colonial settler effectively used violence to pacify the native. What is less documented is how the native sought to balance out the equation. Faced with racial stereotypes and constant humiliation in all fronts, the native (or Negro as Fanon calls them) reacts with a superiority complex, what Fanon terms as “overcompensation,” or with violence. In seeking to break from the totality of the colonial yoke, the native realizes that the “most essential value, because it’s the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.”

Problem as Fanon tells us is that “[t]he colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in bones against his own people.” More importantly, the native realizes that violence can be liberating, it can result in freedom or even a new humanism. Fanon had hoped – erroneously we should add – that violence of the native would end the violence of the colonial settler and result in a new humanism. It seems, however, that the violence of the native in the post colony has mutated into more ferocious cycles of violence, this time pitting the native – not against the settler – but against his fellow native.

In this regard, Berewa Jomo, a human rights researcher and activist, has lamented on how historians have paid little attention on how the manner of violence of the colonial settler and the Mau Mau revolutionary counter-violence affected the people who lived through it and their current behavior and response to socio-political and economic issues. According to her, even less attention is accorded to the effects the violence had on girls and women. Consider her personal experience rendered during an interview:

I remember visiting my mother in the colonial prison. Other women who were jailed together with my Mother clutched me as they cried. I think I reminded them of their children whom they had not seen for long. Conditions in the prison were very traumatizing. As a child, I

32 Frantz Fanon “Excerpts from Concerning Violence” In Manfred Steger and Nancy Lind (eds) Violence and Its Alternatives (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1999)
33 Interview with Berewa Jomo, 11 September 2008
In Search of Healers

witnessed women being forced to dig trenches where bodies of young men killed in the forests were buried in mass. I was told that some of the children whose mothers were jailed had to be hidden to avoid their arrest by the colonial government. Some of this trauma is being reflected currently in the robbery with violence and other criminal activities. There was need for the post independence government to deal with that brutality; to heal and reconcile. But that never happened. Instead, we even developed structures and systems of governance that made the poor poorer.34

Jomo’s notion of collective trauma was shared by a group of professionals and civil society workers in Kiambu. For the FGD, the cycle of violence began in earnest during the Second World War. Unbeknown to many, numerous Kenyan men were forcefully recruited to fight alongside the British army in Burma and other locations during the Second World War. The forceful recruitment caused a breakdown of the social fabric as the most able bodied, strong and healthy men that were recruited.

Upon decommissioning after the war, the men returned to lives of broken down families, abject poverty, shame and hopelessness. Those who had not gone to war had grown up without a father-figure, critical in patriarchal societies. Coupled with the Mau Mau experience, the role of the man in society was fundamentally reconfigured amongst communities that were involved. That is part of the reason why a woman respondent at the validation meeting in Thika, kept on asking “where are the men nowadays?” To the researchers this did not sound like an empty feminist challenge but a lamentation of how the role of the elder, father, husband, brother and boy child has consistently deteriorated over the generations.

Finally, we need to recall that Fanon curiously tells us that the colonized people actually admired and sought to replace the white settler they overtly loathed. So, come uhuru (freedom of political independence), Africans were anxious to take the place of power, wealth and privilege and, from that position, they set into motion cycles of violence whose devastation is being witnessed to date.

34 Interview with Berewa Jomo, 11 September 2008
Ethnic and Political Identities: A Legacy of Violence?

A number of studies show how ethnic identity is an invention of both the colonist and the contemporary politician. Problem is that current research, media and politicians have drummed up the narrative that the number one political problem is ‘negative ethnicity,’ to a point where Kenyan people have began believing that ‘ethnicity’ or ‘tribalism’ – defined loosely as primordial incapacity to respect, tolerate or live with cultural diversity – is the most fundamental national problem. In Nakuru, one respondent was emphatic that “Kenya has actually never witnessed any inter-ethnic violence. What we call ethnic violence is nothing but political instigated violence.” If the respondent is right, how has ethnic identity become a national problem, a foundational principle of our body politic?

To confront this question, let us begin by reflecting on the hypothesis advanced by writer and literary critic Simon Gikandi. While Gikandi shares the view that in the colonial period there were indeed [A]gikuyu people who shared a language, common kinship descent, and shared belief systems, this identity was not corporate or, as centralized as we assume. In his own words:

Indeed, at the end of the nineteenth century when the Agikuyu first came into contact with the Europeans, they were essentially a fluid, acephalous, culture, organized around sub-clans (mbari) and distant memories of a common descent [...] It was in the crucible of colonialism—both in resistance and collaboration—that a Gikuyu group consciousness emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In a recent study on the roots of violence in western Kenya commissioned by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the researchers make a similar point regarding the JoLuo:

We learn from the same sources that indeed, people lived in small independent clans or small groups that were scattered across very wide areas, and remained separated from each other by geographical features. For survival purposes, these clans often

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35 Focus Group Discussion, Nakuru 15 September 2008
forged interdependence relations with their closest neighbors, with whom they shared the same ecosystem and other features. As a result, functional identity attributes became more important, for example, kinship, worldviews (respect for human dignity and life, ethos), age sets, commercial relations, etc. In fact, some interactions usually led to whole groups losing some of the original identity attributes, not considered as very important (language, customs, practices etc) and gaining new ones.37

This is the same conclusion that writer Michela Wrong makes with regard to the AbaLuhya and the Kalenjin in her study of corruption in Kenya, *It is Our Turn to Eat*. Citing John Lonsdale, Wrong argues that ethnic identity in post-colonial Kenya is not inherited but invented.38 Problem, as some sociologists have noted, is that whatever humans conceive to be real, becomes real with consequences. In other words, whereas identity formations were determined by larger political, economic and social structures and were not preordained by natural geography, racialized ontologies, or primordial essences, contemporary political culture has turned them into political problems by themselves.

Through indirect rule in Kenya, the British colonist politicized indignity. And, so doing, Mahmood Mamdani notes “they set in motion a process with the potential of endlessly spawning identities animated by the distinctions indigenous and non-indigenous, and polarizing them.”39 Since the identities were connected to the question of land, the polarization between the indigenous and the settler has continued to date with indigenous people being defined as “settler’ in their own country. To date, as the Waki report noted, “problems of inequality and marginalization thus are often viewed in ethno-geographic terms even though the inequalities between individuals of the same ethnic group are sometimes more pronounced than that between different ethnic groups and geographic areas”40

38 Michela Wrong, *It is Our Turn to Eat* (London: Fourth Estate, 2009) 49
39 Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 33
40 Republic of Kenya, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV), 33
In interviews conducted in Nakuru and Eldoret, the researchers sought to understand the facts about the inter-ethnic relations and their link to land. In several occasions each group of people rendered an interesting, if questionable, mythical version linked to the Old Testament. Each myth obviously justifying how the land they presently lay a claim to was pre-ordained, with echoes to the history of the Israelites. And myths can be powerful, perhaps more potent than historical facts.

Another perspective regarding ethnic identity in the context of post-election violence is shared by veteran journalist Mitch Odero. According to Odero, the post election violence was primarily the result of “our lack of test in competitive democracy.” In December 2007, media and civil society did little to prepare Kenyans for active participation in competitive democracy. We found ourselves competing along ethnic lines. By that time in our history, ethnic communities had become political communities with political agendas.

The politicization of ethnic identity has also been embedded in the rituals of maturation. Elderly interviewees in Eldoret talked of child education at home and circumcision initiation ceremonies where the identification of ‘enemies’ is part of the initiation curriculum. At that young age, boys and girls are taught who their perennial enemies are and in most cases, they are people from other communities. The history taught during initiation ceremonies engenders the hatred and bitterness and, ultimately, the cycle of violence. This also means that the bitterness is passed on to one generation after another.

At a lecture delivered at Caux in 1999, Huber Locke defined the State as a group of people bound by a common misconception of their origin and a unified hatred for their neighbor. Kenya, in the post-election violence context would seem to match this definition. In the course of collection of primary data, we witnessed the level of inter-ethnic tension rise in the in equal measure to the tension between political leaders from different communities. In other words, there seemed to be little difference between the person of the political leader and the entire ethnic group to

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41 Interview with Mitch Odero, 11 September 2008
42 FGD, Eldoret, 30 September 2008
43 Hubert Locke offered this definition at a presentation at the Caux Scholars Program in Switzerland, August 2000.
a degree where the politician and (the tribal) followers are tightly glued by a common misconception of their origin and a unified hatred of their neighbor.

In such a context of imposed and contested political identities, woe unto you if you belong, or are a product of mixed marriages lamented a substantial number of interviewees. During the post-election violence, one could not afford to be “lukewarm” the researchers were told in a variety of interviews. It was time to decide where you belonged and in some cases prove your loyalty, lest you become a target of both sides. Some people were targets merely because their names as much as suggested they belonged to a certain ethnic group.  

In summary, therefore, whereas ethnic identity was not historically a problem in Kenya, contemporary political culture has transformed it into a key national question. Is it possible that Kenyan peoples see each other from lenses of imposed identities and one that they cannot change, and yet all this could be a lie, after all?

Sexual and Gender Based Violence

During the validation workshop for this study, participants in Kiambu, Thika, Nakuru, Eldoret and Kisumu all reported an alarming increase in sexual and gender based violence. Did the post-election violence engender an increase in sexual and gender based violence? We intend to problematize sexual violence (or sexual torture to be specific) as it is one issue being accorded less attention in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. To understand the nature of this violence, we turn to the wisdom of the Sotho-Tswana people of Southern Africa.

The Sotho-Tswana conceptualize personality as Seriti (plural Diriti), which identifies a life force that makes no distinction between body and soul. They believe, as Gabriel Setiloane notes, that humanity is irreducibly psychophysical-body and soul. “In such a cultural understanding” he concludes “to attack the body is to attack the soul and its culture.” This concept would be shared by many other African peoples.

44 FGD, Kisumu, 18 September 2008
45 Drawn from notes by Raphael Ngong Njia Teh
What is less appreciated, therefore, is that sexual violence, which has become a defining feature of violence in Kenya, is not about the sexual act. In her insightful article “The Second Front: The Logic of Sexual Violence in Wars” Ruth Seifert outlines the logic of sexual violence that revolves around the four following issues:

- Sexual violence is intended to destroy a nation’s culture. During wars it is women who hold families and communities together. Their physical and emotional destruction aims at destroying social and cultural stability or what the Sotho-Tswana would call the ‘life-force’ of the community;

- In many cultures, the physical body of a woman symbolizes the system and construction of a group. The community being is made visible in her person, body and life. Therefore the rape of a woman can be regarded as the symbolic rape of that community;

- Rape is used to pollute the enemy community in two ways: contaminating the blood and genes of the other community and dissolving of a group’s spirit and identity; and

- Sexual torture aims at annihilating the person’s interior culture resulting in a loss of identity on the part of the victims. And since individual identity is closely linked to sexual identity, sexual violence is also an assault on the very core of the person’s self.

We also need to add that the increasing incidences of rape of boys and men have an equally devastating effect. Within patriarchal societies, male victims of rape hardly report the incident and would rarely discuss the matter. In general, the male emotional response to rape has been inward, leading to self-destruction.

Therefore, the current patterns of violence suggest that communities are destroying each other internally and externally in a much deeper way than is usually captured by the media. Sexual and gender based violence has long lasting real and symbolic effects.

Male disempowerment as triggers of violence

In her groundbreaking study, *Drivers of Violence: Male Disempowerment in the African Context*, Anzetse Were makes critical links between male disempowerment and the patterns and trends of violence in Africa. With a prayer that her study may contribute to healing and restoration, Were makes some critical points in the male face of violence resulting from the pain, humiliation and suffering the African male has endured, and continues to endure, that drives him to violent acts at all levels of society. These include:

- Compared to other males in the world, it is African men who are most unable to feed, educate and provide shelter and security to their families and community yet they are still considered heads of households with considerable expectations;
- The failure of the African man to defend family and community against Slave Traders and Colonizers resulted in a deep sense of failure of duty to the community and the ancestors. Not only had the men failed in the fundamental duty of providing security for society but, ultimately, their control over family and community was taken away;
- More importantly, men lost land to colonizers. In the eyes of the community and the ancestors men had lost authority over land, a serious charge in a patriarchal system;
- The trend of using raw power and violence, learned from slave traders and colonizers, continues to be replayed in the political culture and at community level; and
- Men have little alternatives to these feelings of disempowerment resulting in an expression of violence as this, according to Were is the ultimate expression of disempowerment.

Were makes the point that “conditions of poverty, unemployment, landlessness, war, disease and famine in Africa today have been superimposed on the trauma from Slave Trade and Colonization passed down from one generation to the next.”

47 Anzetse Were, *Drivers of Violence: Male Disempowerment in the African Context* (Nairobi, MvuleAfrica, 2008) 120
media are any guide, the face of domestic or community violence is predominantly male.

**Structural and institutional violence**

In an interview with a group of elders in Eldoret, the researchers were invited to ponder a scenario that many historians miss about the ‘trauma’ in the Kenyan political culture.

> During the colonialism, both the missionary and the colonial administrator visited homes to recruit young people to attend the missionary school or the *askari* (translated as soldier) to join the colonial army. Now, what many of us do not want to acknowledge is that most parents gave away the ‘black sheep of the family’ to join the missionary school or the colonial army. These were the children who were lazy, stubborn or were considered to be misfits in the family and community. Now, ironically it is these same outcasts, these people we shamed, that were able to rise through the rank in colonial education and/or military experience. Once *uhuru* came, these are the people the colonialists and missionary were ready to hand over the reigns of power. 48

One of the elders, who himself served in the Kenya military, then posed: do you think these people would want to give away power easily? Don’t you think they will do all they can to prove to the rest of society that they merited to be where they are? And, more importantly, don’t you think they share that narrative of humiliation to their children?

To return to our earlier discussion, it is not an exaggeration that the personal traumas of the colonial experience have been reproduced in durable political institutions and culture in Kenya. We should not be surprised that the leaders who inherited the colonial institutions of injustice and violence were not in a hurry to dismantle those institutions.

It is often cited that a core element that defines the modern state is the monopoly and legitimate use of violence in the Westphalian model of the State. The patterns of violence suggest that the Kenyan state, like other neighboring states, is slowly losing that monopoly. The Waki report rightly

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48 Interview, FGD Eldoret, 16 October 2008
noted that the state “no longer commanded the monopoly of force it once had in a previous era as such diffused extra state violence existed all over the country, where it could be called up tapped any time, including being used to arbitrate over election as it has been doing since the early 1990s”

The divide and rule approaches to governance have permeated even other social institutions. Journalist Charles Onyango-Obbo once wrote about a study that showed that Africans became more tribalistic as they rose up the academic ladder. As one advances in the academy, the reality suddenly dawns that “one criteria that no one asks for during job interviews is your tribe.” Even with the highly emotive issue of land, there are cases where Land Control Boards, chaired by District Commissioners, would not approve sale of land if the purchaser was deemed a “foreigner.” Of course, such denial would be couched in technical language.

The sad reality is that humans – both victim and perpetrator – always become disturbed, to put it mildly, with any form of violence. Peter Nazareth makes an important observation with regard to the Fanon’s manifesto for revolutionary violence, *Wretched of the Earth*: “[...] for some strange reasons many critics and admirers of Fanon overlook case histories he has included in the last but one chapter of the *Wretched of the Earth* [...] these case histories reveal that people become physically disturbed by violence, whether that violence is fascist, imperialist or revolutionary counter violence.

In our experience during this study, any form of violence does not just disturb the physical as Nazareth suggests, it disturbs the moral and spiritual amongst others. This point leads us to confront a rather difficult subject: is the perpetrator of violence also traumatized? If the perpetrator is indeed traumatized, what is the nature of the trauma? What are the possibilities for healing for both the individual perpetrator and the collective? We shall return to this subject in the next chapter.

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49 Republic of Kenya, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV), 32
50 Interview with George Odu, 18 October 2008
51 Focus Group Discussion, Nakuru 8 September 2010
52 Peter Nazareth, *Literature and Society in Modern Africa* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1972) 130
What scenarios do these patterns suggest?

If no intentional efforts are made to break the cycles of violence and impunity in Kenya, our evidence points to at least five potential scenarios that can nurture the current patterns of violence:

1. There is no doubt that the post-election violence followed the patterns of previous ‘ethnic clashes’ or ‘land clashes’ only that this time the scale after the election was more ferocious. The violence created a new wave of victims: the potential killers of tomorrow. The current efforts to break that cycle of violence and impunity needs to be enhanced by government agencies, civil society organizations and religious institutions;

2. If the current evidence from validation workshop is any guide, the cycles of violence and impunity are being played out at the family and community level through the rise of sexual and gender based violence. Violence at that level creates silent victims who become potential killers. We need also note that sexual violence is no longer limited to girls and women as was previously assumed; boys and men are equally vulnerable to sexual and gender based violence. Put differently the face of another cycle of violence would be felt both internally, within the ethnic group, and externally;

3. In at least two locations, Nakuru and Kisumu, the researchers were told in FGDs that part of the reason the post-election violence subsided was that the youth began targeting their very own middle class. As the violence assumed its own life weeks after it began, it became apparent that there was a class of people who, because of their economic means and status, were not quite feeling the ‘heat’. “Next time” the researchers were told “it would not be post-election violence but class violence.”

It is clear that the huge income disparity, the questionable acquisition of quick wealth, the lack of employment and opportunity for the youth as well as the culture of flouting wealth has provided fertile rounds for class conflict in Kenya. In the urban areas like Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu and Eldoret, youths are realizing that they share a common problem and perhaps a common ‘enemy.’ Our view is that with increasing popularity of social networks on the internet the youth posses a powerful tool of breaking traditional barriers and political facades. With increasing

53 FGD, Nakuru, 8 September 2010
numbers, ICT provides the youth with tools for rapid social mobilization. Whether they will mobilize for peace or other destructive conflict should concern us all.

4. One interviewee led us to ponder on the regional implications of the post-election violence. With the porous borders and emergence of new movements, disgruntled youth can build solidarity across the territorial borders. In addition to the easy access to small arms and light weapons, this can result in a very unstable and fragile region. Recent reports indicate that formations such as al-Shabaab or the Lord’s Resistance Army are not purely Somali or Ugandan respectively. The rank and file in both movements include citizens from other countries or young people who – out of desperation – no longer feel bound by any sense of patriotism and allegiance to any central government.

5. Whereas the newly adopted constitution in Kenya provides greater space and opportunity to break the cycles of violence and impunity, our evidence has found that the political culture will require more time, energy and effort to be transformed. Already, during the validation workshops people talked of conflict generating factors in some clauses that can perpetuate clan and ethnic exclusion, redistribute corruption, and provide new nodes of abject poverty.

As already mentioned, the first round of interviews took place in September and October of 2008. The country had just emerged from post-election violence and the tension was understandable. When we returned to do the validation workshops in September 2010, two years later, we had hoped, rather naively that the tension would have subsided and perhaps people and communities would have ‘moved on.’ Even when positive things were happening, for instance the rebuilding of Kisumu city and its environs, we were told that this was happening, not because people had a lot of money to invest but because they were afraid of what might happen in the next round of general elections. Therefore, people were receding to the safety of the backyards of imposed ethnic silos.
As peace researchers, we were disturbed that people openly talked about the need for revenge. On several occasions, people talked about “raundi hii...” (This time round...) we will not be caught unawares. With pending political processes, like the expected indictments by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of political leaders who organized, funded or led the post-election violence, or the implementation of contentious articles in the new constitution, it is not an exaggeration the potential for mass violence still exists. We should expect political leaders, particularly those feeling threatened and insecure to take full advantage of such triggers to violence. In Nakuru and Eldoret, there was open talk about the oathing and arming that is going on. The time for comprehensive action to break the cycle of violence is now; the responsibility cannot be passed on to another generation.
Health and ill-health are closely linked to culture because the ways in which people express, experience, and give meaning to their well-being or afflictions are tied to specific socio-cultural beliefs and knowledge systems. In this connection, psychological distress and trauma have a social and cultural dimension. Cultural beliefs and knowledge systems are central in devising appropriate therapeutic strategies for enhancing health and eliminating ill-health [...] Health is therefore defined as not merely the absence of disease and infirmity, but a positive state of physical, mental, and social well-being. The definition goes beyond the Western biomedical tradition that separates between body and mind. – Alex Kamwaria
Introduction: Collective Trauma and the psychopathological alternatives

In the last chapter, we attempted an analysis of the root cause of violence and the patterns, trends and cycles it has assumed to date. In this chapter, we focus on the theme of health and ill-health and building on the arguments and hypotheses made in the previous chapter. We begin with the issue of how we understand trauma from an African perspective. Do Africans understand trauma differently than the dominant literature from Western Europe and America?

An interview with Alfred Kibunja (then, the chair of Kenya Counselors Association and practicing peace worker), raised key questions on approaches to healing individual trauma and collective trauma. Is there something like an ‘African understanding of trauma’? Are peace workers venturing in a specialized area for which they have no expertise and competence? In a context where a mass of individuals and communities have experienced trauma – and where one-on-one counseling is practically impossible – what alternatives do we have? Are there traditions and cultures of healing, passed on from generation to generation, that we cannot afford to lose in designing a contemporary national healing architecture?

Ironically, it is the American Psychologist Ethan Watters who helps us understand what would constitute an African understanding of trauma. Watters is persuasive that in the recent past there has been a “grand project” of Americanizing the world’s understanding of mental health and illness. A key feature of this project is the manner it has homogenized the “way the world goes mad.”

Watters insist that the American model of understanding trauma stems from the biomedical model and that model is not culturally neutral as the proponents would want the rest of the world to believe. Yet, modern mental-health practitioners and researchers believe that theories of the mind, illness categories and drugs developed are not captive to the ever changing traditions and beliefs. The most visible impact of this trend is that the biomedical model has not just transformed the nature of treatment but also the expression of mental illness in other cultures!

Put differently, embedded in the biomedical model are subtle assumptions of Western culture. In this regard, Watters offers examples of the limitations of Western ideas and models of trauma and healing. In a comparative study of schizophrenia – generally understood in the West as a mental disorder characterized by a disintegration of the process of thinking and of emotional responsiveness – Watters and his team of researchers were curious why people in the non-Western countries seemed to fare better over time. The findings validated a widely held belief that besides the strong bonds of family and kinship, the ill person had access to a variety of socially accepted interventions and ministrations that were less stigmatizing.

The most compelling argument against the dominance of psychopathological approaches to healing, is best explained by Clancy and Hamber. They argue that such a limited and individualized understanding “has the potential to augment individual suffering and thwart a community’s ability to reconstitute itself by pathologising resilience and denigrating local coping mechanisms.”

Interestingly, the idea of collective trauma healing amongst people of African descent goes beyond the African borders. Citing evidence from other studies:

> Despite having similar prevalence rates of mental health problems as the general population [...], people of color in the United States seem less likely than White Americans to seek treatment from traditional mental health specialists and have been reported to be underrepresented in the services that are provided [...]. For example, after entering mental health treatment, African Americans have reportedly been more likely than Whites to terminate prematurely [...]. Furthermore, fewer than half of American Indians who sought mental health services were likely to return after an initial contact with a mental health professional.

55 Mary A. Clancy and Brandon Hamber “Trauma, Peacebuilding, and Development: An overview of key positions and critical questions” 12

It would seem that people of African descent across the oceans still define trauma in the collective socio-cultural sense; that it indicates how deep this understanding and such collective practices are. The individual counseling methods are still viewed as stigmatizing and largely unhelpful in moving from ill-health to comprehensive health.

Understanding Trauma: Kiuundu, Arogonet and Kihondko

Let us now frame trauma using the three Kenyan languages purposefully selected in this study; namely, the Agikuyu, Kalenjin and JoLuo. During the interviews conducted in mid 2008 and the validation workshops conducted in September 2010, there was general consensus that the term ‘trauma’ would be equivalent to the following in the three terms:

Agikuyu: Kiuundu
Kalenjin: Arogonet
JoLuo: Kihondko

The three terms literally translate as ‘deep shock.’ In other words, the interviewees accepted that life has its disappointments and levels of stress, however when we talk of Kiuundu, Arogonet and Kihondko this was shock beyond ordinary individual and collective human capacity to handle. Compared to other words that would suggest low levels of trauma, the three terms indicate that this is the kind of shock that results in:

- imbalance in whole being – the head, heart and spirit;
- brokenness of the psyche/soul that can lead to denial, self-destruction and recklessness;
- loss of sense of value and meaning; and
- a wound that heals painfully slowly.

It is apparent that the understanding of deep pain cannot be contained within the biomedical dichotomy of body and mind. In his study of the Dinka people of Southern Sudan, Alex Kamwaria has demonstrated
how social relationships serve as a contributor to the state of being healthy or in ill-health. Again, the idea of relationships much broader. Fr Laurenti Magesa talks of the ‘unbreakable’ relationship that God has with the entire universe, at the center of which is humanity. Humanity is, in turn, related intrinsically and inseparably with all the life force of each living and non-living thing. Therefore, we can conclude that humanity gets into ‘ill-health’ whenever this web of relationship is not in some form of equilibrium.57

However, we note that in a context of rapid urbanization, the majority of the interviewees saw the need for specialized attention for individual traumas. The dilemma that remains is how would we respond to collective trauma that is becoming more frequent, in particular the trauma induced by institutional failure, excessive fear and powerlessness?

Listening and interacting in formal and informal spaces with participants of FGDs in Nakuru and Eldoret the researchers got the distinct feeling that collective trauma was clear and present. Riva Kantowitz and Abikök Riak note that collective trauma “results from the experience of living in an environment rife with fear and institutional failure, which can result in collective narratives that individuals and communities’ create based on their real and perceived access to resources and opportunities.”58 Asked what she considered to be her moment of deep pain, one respondent in Eldoret told us that the “most painful thing in life is to wake up in the morning without a plan, without a dream, without a sense of what you could do in future yet you have your piece of land, your house and children. I do not plan for the future; like a bird, I live day-by-day.”59

Trauma Healing, Peacebuilding and Development

In an article that attempts to link trauma healing, peacebuilding and development, Mary Clancy and Brandon Hamber share the view that “extreme political trauma it is not just a health problem, but a sociopolitical

57 Laurenti Magesa, African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life, 248
59 Validation Workshop, Eldoret, 8 September 2010
problem.” Therefore, “what needs to be “healed” is multitude of individual, political, social, and cultural responses to a traumatic situation and its aftermath.” This notion, in our view provides the fulcrum for crafting a national architecture of healing and reconciliation.

The research in theoretical connections between trauma healing, peacebuilding and development are perhaps best captured not by academic studies such as this one but by African novelists, notable amongst them being Ngugi wa Thiong’o from Kenya, Ayi Kwei Armah from Ghana and Nuruddin Farah from Somalia. To borrow Chinyere Nwahunanya phraseology, it is the writers who have served as physicians in their therapeutic vision of Africa. For example, in Armah’s novel, aptly titled The Healers (first published in 1978), Armah conceptualizes the problem of post-colonial state as that of fragmentation and disunity. In such a dysfunctional state, symbolized by the Ashanti kingdom, the leaders and the people have lost their moral anchor. Manipulation and misuse of political power becomes the norm. Viewed as the political credo of healing, the novelist, according to Nwahunanya, sees the task of healers as that of “cultivation of the awareness that can ensure that a complete return to the ethos of ‘the way’, connectedness and reciprocity.”

Therefore, the collective understanding of trauma is more predominant as Harold Miller, founder member of the Nairobi Peace Initiative—Africa, pointed out in an interview:

The concept of trauma was lived in a communal setting and was not individualized. For example there were healing ceremonies where the person to be de-traumatized was not even there. In other words: the community needed to be prepared to receive and de-traumatize the victim. The notion of trauma was dealt with collectively. The approach to trauma is that of the collective. That partly explains why there is a name for collective health, but not for individual sickness in African languages.

In the same vein, Daniel Kiptugen, who has extensive experience building peace in pastoralist areas in the sub-region, notes that amongst pastoralist

60 Mary A. Clancy and Brandon Hamber “Trauma, Peacebuilding, and Development: An overview of key positions and critical questions” 8
61 Interview with Harold Miller, 10 September 2008. Miller was one of the founder members of Nairobi Peace Initiative - Africa.
communities, when one has committed a crime that causes deep pain, like rape, the crime was not individual. For example, if one individual from a particular clan of the Pokot committed rape, the guilt of that crime was shared by the entire clan. The challenge then is that both the crime and the trauma are collectively shared.

In an FGD in Thika, the researchers were told that you do not have to physically experience pain in order to be traumatized. All it takes is one of ‘your own’ to be attacked and anyone belonging to that ethnic group will be traumatized.

Dekha Ibrahim, an experienced peace worker, hypothesizes that collective trauma even transcends geographical distance. In Kenya now, you no longer have to be affected by direct violence to be traumatized. You do not even have to reside in Kenya. According to her, one of the most traumatized groups that we pay little attention to is the Kenyan community in Diaspora. The political tensions internally are usually played out in ethnic relations amongst Kenya whether they are as near as Rwanda or as far as New Zealand. With comparatively more resources – skills, communication and media in particular – the Diaspora can be influential in shaping the narratives of collective victimhood and/or of healing.

Ali A. Mazrui, a foremost political scientist introduces the matter of respect (or lack of it) to ancestors as accounting to the status of ill-health in our governance systems. In a provocative article titled, “Who killed Democracy in Africa? Clues of the Past, Concerns of the Future” Mazrui notes part of the problem with African democracy is that “cultural half-caste” who were alienated from the traditions and cultures of their own people were in charge of governance. He writes that these cultural-half-castes:

who came in from Western schools and did not adequately respect African ancestors. Institutions were inaugurated without reference to cultural compatibilities, and new processes were introduced without respect for continuities. Ancestral standards of property, propriety and legitimacy were ignored. When writing up a new constitution for Africa these elites would ask themselves, “How

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62 Interview with Daniel Kiptugen, 24 September 2010
63 Informal conversation with Dekha Ibrahim, 5 October 2010
does the House of Representatives in the United States structure its agenda? How do the Swiss cantons handle their referendum? […] these African elites almost never asked, “How did the Banyoro, the Wolof, the Igbo or the Kikuyu govern themselves before colonization?” In the words of the Western philosopher Edmund Burke, “People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors.” Who killed African democracy? Perhaps the angry spirits of the ancestors themselves. Have the ancestors cursed the first two or three generations of postcolonial Africans because of our apparent contempt for the legacy of our ancestors? Many Africans are ashamed of indigenous religions. For example, they have no public space in the curriculum of schools; nor are there celebrations of special indigenous sacred days. Africa celebrates festivals like Christmas and Eid el Fitr every year, but almost no African country has set aside a special holiday to celebrate traditional indigenous religions. Have the ancestors responded with an all-powering curse upon our generations? “Your roads will decay, your railways will rust, your factories will grind to a standstill, your schools will stink with overcrowding and crumble with incompetence, your soil will fight so-called desertification and your economies suffocate under your new globalization. Your democracy will smolder like a dying bush fire, after a drizzle of hate.”

It is instructive that a celebrated political scientist turns to our relationship with our ancestors to explain the current states of our decay and ill-health.

Though this study was being done in the context of the post-election violence, quite a number of interviewees defined their source of deep pain as having emerged from different sources. Prof Mary Getui, for instance, was disturbed by the way we use water, a critical element of life, to quell public protests. Other interviewees also talked of an incidence where farmers opted to pour milk while there are millions starving in Kenya and within our borders. Such actions attract the ‘curse’ of the ancestors.

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65 Interview, Prof Mary Getui, 12 September 2008
Comparative narratives of victimhood: Lamentations

This study focused on three communities in Kenya: the Agikuyu, Kalenjin and JoLuo. We present the synthesis of how the respondents from the three communities view their trauma and victimhood when responding to the question: would you consider your community traumatized? If yes, what evidence shows that a collective trauma exists amongst your people?

In considering these generalizations, let us bear in mind that people who shared the same ancestry, regardless of their geographic location in the country, expressed virtually the same feelings. In sharing these narratives we heed the warning of Kimani Njogu: “[n]arratives of violent conflict, such as happened in Kenya, are not absolute: they are contested, contradictory and incomplete. But they must be told so that multiple voices from the citizens can be heard.”

Whenever the researchers asked the participants of the FGDs whether they considered their community as traumatized, as a collective, the response was revealing. Each of the FGDs considered themselves as the most traumatized. In other words, for each community, the narrative of victimhood is strong and shared.

We have framed the findings in this regard as lamentations, it is our sense that this would provoke more reflection, learning and dialogue rather than enhance pain and victimhood.

Agikuyu
Hear us fellow Kenyans, brothers and sisters:

“Do you understand the shame and humiliation that we endured during colonialism? Do you see the scars we bear and how that has affected our people to date?”

66 Kimani Njogu (ed) Healing the Wound: Personal Narratives about the 2007 Post-Election Violence in Kenya (Nairobi: Twaweza Communications, 2009) 1
“Why should we, as a people be made to constantly feel responsible for all the problems in Kenya? Why should we be punished for our entrepreneurial and adventurous spirit when all we seek is what, you too, seek? Why should we, as a people be a constant target by almost all communities in Kenya?”

“Why should we be killed and displaced almost every election year? Why should our children be witness of these deaths and displacement? And, why in the name of God, should our people, including children, die in a Church?”

“Why do we kill and harm ourselves? Why should our young men be associated with death and destruction of life? Why should they rape our women?

Kalenjin
Fellow Kenyans, brothers and sisters:

“Why should the name Kalenjin be associated with war and blood?

“Why do you call us all those names? Don’t you think we hear them? And, not just from the mouths of men in a bar, but also from the women in the market and the children returning from school?”

“Why is our suffering never recognized? Did you know that our people too were affected? Did you know that our people died and were displaced? Why is the suffering of the Kalenjin not part of the narrative?

“Why this blanket condemnation of the Kalenjin? You have made even people outside Kenya, in other parts of the world, to pick the stereotypes and prejudices. Do you know how painful it is to arrive at a European city and be met with the same stereotypes and prejudices about the Kalenjin?
JoLuo
Fellow Kenyans, brothers and sisters:

“Why are we regarded as the trouble-makers, the people who must be excluded from leadership in government? What logic makes you link male circumcision in your politics of exclusion and electoral doctrine?”

“Our is political traumatization: what else would you call the constant assassination of political leaders? How else would you call the constant betrayals and lack of reciprocity by political leaders from other communities?

“How comes riots and protests in Nyanza are usually met with unnecessary force and violence from the state security agencies? Why have our young men and women in Kisumu died unnecessary deaths for expressing their political views while the same does not happen, in equal measure in other parts of the country?

“Nyanza, why are you so poor yet you have been blessed with the ‘brain power.’ Where are the intellectuals who can help us break this cycle of poverty and gonya”?

The two phrases that all the communities shared were that “please respect us” and “we are also Kenyans.” At the same time, the FGDs were open enough to discuss some of the issues that they, as a community needed to do to break down the negative stereotypes and perceptions.

The Trauma of the perpetrator

Harold Miller, founder member of Nairobi Peace Initiative—Africa, raised an important point with regard to the trauma and attendant counter-violence. According to Miller, people engage in violence if they are not happy with themselves. And in Kenya, many people are not happy with themselves.

67 In Dholuo “gonya” literary translates as ‘untie me.’ In current political culture it denotes a syndrome of dependency on the propertied and political class. It is not uncommon to find groups of youth waiting in strategic places in urban Kisumu for any politician and rich business people to ‘untie’ them.
because they are constantly told that they are bad, backward and that their lifestyle is simply not fit for the modern world. The tendency, as Miller notes, is that people are more likely to react with violence when constantly faced with denigration. In Kenya’s political culture, there is a disturbing element where the mistakes or transgressions of a few politicians are turned to blanket denigration of entire nations.

In an incisive article titled “Journey to belonging” Howard Zehr invites us to consider a very difficult but necessary subject: the trauma of the perpetrator or offender. What would be the ‘healing journey’ for the perpetrators of post-election violence, the previous waves of violence and the violence many of us continue to experience as you read this paragraph. Let us listen to Zehr:

Paradoxically, perhaps, offenders must travel a parallel road. I am convinced that offending behavior often arises out of unhealthy ways of coming to terms with these same ‘pillars’ of autonomy, order and relatedness [...] For offenders as well as victims, until these issues are settled, we cannot belong; for offenders as well as victims, the process of settling these issues is a journey to belonging. Since it involves relationships with others, the journey cannot be made alone [...] most offenders have been victims or believe themselves to have been victims; most violence is a response to perceived violation [...] violence itself is often driven by a need to reciprocate, to vindicate oneself, by replacing humiliation with honor.

Part of the biggest challenges to contemporary peace workers is to conceptualize and create spaces for the perpetrators to undertake their healing journey. Anzetse Were in her study of male disempowerment and levels of violence makes a similar point by calling for better understanding of boys and men.

In conclusion, therefore, the kind of trauma being experienced by the majority of Kenyans is not just individual but, more importantly collective and intergenerational. Its roots lie deep in our collective history as a people and have potential of affecting future generations. In the next two chapters we consider what alternatives we could take, individually and collectively to break from the cycle of violence.

68 Harold Miller, 11 September 2008
ON THE TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Introduction: Do we need a TJRC?

One of the terms of reference for this study was to generate information and knowledge that will form a basis for civil society engagement and advocacy with the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC). The assumption is that a TJRC process, like similar processes in South Africa, Asia and South America provide a rare opportunity to deal with a dark history, attain justice and above all, search for healing.

When interviews were conducted in mid 2008 there was virtual unanimity that the country did not need a TJRC. When the researchers returned to conduct the validation workshops in September 2010, there was virtual unanimity that Kenya needed the truth, justice and reconciliation – as
a process – but not through a troubled commission such as TJRC. Let us consider the reasons advanced by the interviewees for the ‘rejection’ of the TJRC. The researchers have retained the ‘voices’ of the individual select interviewees as we recorded them as this provides, in our view, a timbre of authenticity:

1. “There are deep issues in the society that once we try to solve through the legislative root, then we run away from the people. A TJRC needs to be done from the ground up; not the other way round. There has to be popular acceptance of the process even if it is done through a referendum”;  

2. “When we open a wound, we need to be prepared to pour balm and treat it. It seems that the TJRC is only interested in opening the wounds, counting them and going back to Nairobi.” Where are the structures for healing within the TJRC framework?” 

3. “I have read the TJRC Act and to me, the mandate is broad, perhaps too broad to sufficiently deal with any wave of violence in Kenya. Look at the time frame for example. When you look at the mandate and the time frame it feels like ‘old wine in old skin.’ That kind of commission cannot result in healing. It will only soothe Kenyans and make them assume that change is happening.” 

4. “The TJRC in the context of our political culture will not work. Unlike South Africa or Rwanda, you do not see or hear any politician expressing a genuine desire for truth, justice and healing of the nation.” 

5. “My immediate reaction to the list of commissioners was not good. I asked myself does that list include a clinical psychologist, an anthropologist, a historian who can help guide the process of healing? I thought there were too many lawyers in the commission. Initially, I was guardedly optimistic that we could use the institution to address our problem but now we are busy destroying the same institution.” 

6. “Kenyans are experiencing ‘commissions’ fatigue.’ How many commissions have we had in this country? Do we know their findings? And, if we do, tell me how many have been implemented? What makes us think the TJRC will be different?”
7. “A TJRC can only work well under a new constitutional framework that is people driven (this was in September 2008). Under the current legal framework, a TJRC will be stillborn.”

8. “If you look at the myriad of problems facing this country, is the TJRC a priority? Maybe the time will come but for now we need to deal with more urgent matters. We have poverty to address, education for our children, health services for our family and community. What we need now is justice and radical leadership. Please do not distract our attention with a TJRC.”

9. “It is too early to have such a commission. The post-election violence has just ended and the wounds are still fresh. Even for those of us who experienced ethnic clashes of 1992 and 1997, the wounds are still fresh. Who is ready to apologize? Who is ready to forgive?”

10. “Can the TJRC treat both the rich and poor equally? I doubt. My fear is that this commission will be a commission to exonerate the rich and hurt the poor even more.”

11. “We need a TJRC and yet we do not. What is a TJRC going to add? Is the good will there? Look at the Gacaca court process in Rwanda, it is not as objective as one could expect. Some have used it to settle political scores. You really are not judged fairly. For some people, the truth makes things worse. It may help the perpetrator but not the victim. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was substantially helped by the presence of Bishop Desmond Tutu. Who will be our Tutu? Tutu had a way to deal with both victim and offender.”

12. “Communities are already finding their ways to heal and reconcile. What we need to do, instead of spending more money on a Nairobi-based commission, is to create and support community level initiatives for justice and reconciliation.”

13. “TJRC should be established. How else shall we deal with contentious issues such as land and political assassinations? People know the truth about what happened and let them tell us now. It is an opportunity to address our major problems once and for all.”
Lessons from Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

In a recent study on Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) in Africa conducted by Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-A) and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), five key lessons were outlined that are relevant to our assessment of the Kenyan Truth Justice and Reconciliation. As outlined by lead researcher Prisca Kamungi, these issues tend to generally impede the overall success of TRCs as foundational pillars of healing and rebuilding:

(a) **TRCs are not victim-responsive**: Public hearings are usually victim-dominated; perpetrators are reluctant to reveal the truth; promised prosecutions never take place; amnesty clauses are controversial; victim-friendly recommendations delayed; and implementation process can cause new victims.

(b) **Clarity of mandate and terminology**: The purpose and mandate is usually not well communicated to the public; media and NGO publicity campaigns misguide or raise unrealistic expectations; definition of important concepts and terminology lacking.

(c) **Recommendations are not Implemented**: TRCs wind up abruptly leaving lose ends and unfinished business; investigations are generally incomplete; data not systematically compiled, analyzed or useful after TRC; recommendations are not implemented due to cost or political strategy; no clear policy linkages with national institutions or commissions; and most TRCs lack follow-up mechanism (for example, the self-propelling clauses like that of the Waki Commission).

(d) **Civil society engagement**: NGOs can become subsumed and abandon watchdog role; NGOs can become complicit in failures of the TRC; need for ‘sufficient’ involvement by NGOs with objective distance; and NGOs should champion advocacy for implementation of recommendations.

(e) **Reparations**: Victim-friendly recommendations are largely ignored; the question of who should be compensated endures; there is the notion of good victim and bad victim; not clear what forms of ‘suffering’ warrant reparations; cases of equating loss with reparations difficult; reparations are seen as inadequate; ‘Symbolic’ reparations

Presentation at the Pact Kenya Partners Review meeting, Garissa, 22 September 2010
not well explained or appreciated; divisions amongst recognized and unrecognized victims; and, can increase gender violence.

Civil Society Engagement: Some Proposals

In the Kenyan context, how could civil society engage with the TJRC, assuming that the process is potentially a foundational; pillar in a national healing architecture? Besides the issue of the credibility of the chair, other ways that civil society can engage with the TJRC process is to:

- Support and link the community based healing initiatives with the TJRC process.
- Retain a strong ‘watchdog’ role as is happening now.
- Engage ‘behind the scenes’ on matters of contention.
- Track the needs and recommendations by victims
- Advocate for full implementation of the recommendations.
TOWARDS BREAKING THE CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

Oh 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

First stanza of the Kenyan National Anthem
Introduction: Moments of Pride

The first question that the researchers asked the respondents was to recall a moment of deep pride, or happiness, as a citizen of Kenyan. A synthesis of some of those moments is a good point to start the conversation on possibilities of breaking the cycles of violence and impunity.

- The moment of independence in 1963 stood out, particularly for the older generation. Major Seii, a member of the Kalenjin Council of Elders, recalls with the sense of pride at seeing Africans take over the leadership of the key institutions of the state at independence. The sense of freedom and promise was overwhelming.

- Respondents had a variety of childhood memories that gave them joy and pride, particularly in the 70s and early 80s. As children, they were able to play together, attend schools away from home and grew up in a situation where one’s ‘tribe’ was never a defining factor.

- Sports, particularly athletics feels majority of the respondents with joy. Listening to the Kenyan national anthem play on world stage when medals are awarded serves as a special moment for majority of respondents. Occasionally, this sense of pride is also felt in other sports, such as when Gor Mahia won the Mandela Cup in 1989.

- In 2002, when the government began the Free Primary Education (FPE) and the non-formal educational program that offered opportunities of education for all, regardless of class and status.

- Moments of pride in the political transformation included: the repeal of section 2A that allowed a return to multi-party democracy in 1991; the election of President Mwai Kibaki in 2002; and the signing of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act in February 2008.

- It is in moments of crisis such as the post-election violence, when ordinary citizens came together to render support to each other, with minimal resources and in many cases, across ethnic lines.

There were also moments during the interviews when respondents spoke in ways that challenged their communities to look inward. For example, in Thika and Kiambu, respondents reflected on what they could do to deal with the perception that other communities saw them as arrogant, unable to
freely work interdependently with others and had a sense of entitlement to political leadership on account of their numbers. In Rift Valley, the youths spoke of ways that can break myths and images about “the name Rift Valley being synonymous with violence.” In Kisumu, again, the youth spoke of ways they would work with their political leaders to debunk the myths that their community was arrogant and unable to work with others.

During the validation workshops, there was conversation on why the 2010 referendum had been peaceful. It is evident that part of the reason is that there now exists a substantial number of community based peace initiatives. In form of peace committees, rapid response teams, early warning mechanisms, peace clubs, these initiatives help to rebuild relations and alert competent authorities in cases of potential crisis. It is therefore safe to state that though the potential for violence still exists, communities at the grassroots are working earnestly to build an infrastructure of peace. It is our evidence that the pillars of healing and rebuilding, are firmly in place.

Nevertheless, one of the most important lessons the researchers took out of the entire research process is that the respondents recognized that the country is entangled in a web and cycle of violence; that this is not the country they would like to bequeath to generations to come; and above all, that we had the capacity to make bold decisions.

In several interviews, respondents alluded to the lost dream, envisioned by the founding Mothers and Fathers of Kenya; dreams well captured in the lyrics of the first stanza of the national anthem. It is instructive that even during some of the protests mounted after the 27 December 2007 general election results, crowds sang the national anthem repeatedly, perhaps more often than they have ever done in their adult life.

Community Based Peace Initiatives during post-election violence

In the recently published booklet *Citizens in Action: Making Peace in the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya – 2008*, George Wachira details the work of civil society organizations and movements like the Concerned Citizens for
Peace, in peacemaking and peacebuilding during the moments of crisis. What have been less documented are the initiatives of ordinary people and small formations at the grassroots that helped steer the country off the crisis.

In many places the researchers visited, organizations such as the Rural Women Peace Link, local peace committees, Elders and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions responded robustly using very little resources, engaging networks of contacts and relationships they had created and basically taking the initiative away from the political leaders. These initiatives built on the local capacities for resilience and an enduring culture of peace.

James Kimisoi⁷⁰ of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic diocese of Eldoret notes that communities in Kaptelond/Yamumbi in the outskirts of Eldoret town are already engaging in dialogues through Peace Committees composed of elders from across the ethnic divide. In fact, the community dialogues have resulted in a commitment to draw up and signing a ‘social contract’ that would bind both communities to peace. Part of the process of an inclusive healing and peacebuilding strategy is engaging young people, across ethnic lines, in joint projects to demonstrate the value of peace and inter-dependence.

Several respondents viewed the current exchange visits by elders from various ethnic groups as a positive step in debunking the myth of ‘tribalism’ and reviving traditional channels of exchange of information and business. It is generally recognized that for a long time, a few political leaders have succeeded to construct the narrative of ethnic hatred for individual political ends. The youth in particular, affirm that they are able to detect when politicians and the media are manipulating them through ethnicised politics.

Following the post-election violence, the diocese of Eldoret offered a comprehensive program of psycho-social support alongside other relief programs. The programs are well documented in Bishop Cornelius Korir’s book *Amani Mashinani: Peace at the Grassroots*. With modest resources, the diocese combined relief, humanitarian, trauma healing and peacebuilding activities.

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⁷⁰ Interview, 30 September 2008
The Coalition for Peace in Africa has also conducted trauma awareness training programs, particularly in Eldoret and the Mount Elgon areas. One of the goals of the community based trainings programs is enlarging the pool of community workers with skills to offer assistance and care to a mass of people affected by the violent conflict.

Before we offer some proposal on possible strategies for breaking the cycle of violence, we need to note that a most confusing issue was the question of rituals. In all the FGDs, there was acknowledgement that rituals of cleansing and healing are being performed. However, when the research team sought details of examples and descriptions of processes, most respondents preferred not to discuss the details. It seems the traditional secrecy associated with rituals of healing is extant, posing a challenge to peace workers who may wish to adopt or modernize the rituals of cleansing. It would seem that rituals form part of the core cultures of a community and in such circumstances, such knowledge is only shared by a few internally and may not easily be revealed to those who are not part of the community, much less to researchers intending to publish the information.

It is in this light that we offer the following proposals and recommendations that could help the cycle of violence.

1. **Debunking the myth of ethnicity.** Successive political regimes have succeeded in making ethnicism the defining factor in Kenya’s political culture yet, historically, people of African descent, including those in Kenya have easily related across ethnic or clan divides. The Zimbabwean poet Chenjarai Hove once noted that people do not build a nation by destroying the villages. Hove lamented that the newly independent nation-states were emphasizing ‘national unity’ while encouraging people to feel insecure regarding their ethnic identity. And, once people feel insecure in their ethnic identity, as many elderly respondents noted, they are unable to meaningfully encounter other identities. In other words, we can only feel secure as Kenyans when we are secure in our ethnic identities.

   With perhaps the most robust civil society in the region, Kenya can, and should, take the lead in debunking the myth of ethnicity as the political problem. The driving factors of corruption, unresponsive
governance, wanton poverty, amongst other key national problems, do not reside in ethnic differences as the political class and the media seem to have engineered majority of the people to believe.

2. **Healing is not a “soft option”?** In patriarchal societies, there exists a tendency to view trauma healing as a soft option, with little or no space in real politik. Even within civil society trauma healing is seen as a “soft option” best left to religious leaders and faith-based organizations. This study shows, unhealed trauma is the heart of the cycles of violence Kenya continues to experience at all levels of society. World Vision is one of the few agencies that have crafted a framework that places trauma healing at its rightful place in the quest to create independent, empowered and sustainable individuals and communities. As Kantowitz and Riak note, “peacebuilding, trauma healing, and development and the practices associated with them inherently overlap because they share a set of fundamental core values: meeting basic human needs, promoting human rights, and eliminating structural and over violence.”

3. **Supporting organic healing processes.** In the course of the study, it was evident that communities have found ways to ‘move on.’ Some of these have included community dialogues and joint development projects like in the areas of Kapteldon/Yamumbi in Eldoret and in Burnt Forest. Government and CSOs initiatives need to tap into and support such process. CSOs need to resist the temptation of assuming that nothing is happening in the process of healing.

4. **Healing is a process not a project.** Related to the question of supporting organic initiatives is the dominant approach where CSOs seem to be in a hurry to ‘bring people together’ with the mistaken assumption that when ‘people come together’ claims for impact of their work would be more pronounced. While there are cases where it was productive to bring people together in ‘reconciliation’ meetings, the findings of this study suggest that CSOs would rather invest more in intra-ethnic healing and dialogues.

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5. **Linking mental health work with collective trauma healing work.** The status of research in collective trauma healing shows that there are common grounds for linking the individualized approaches of mental health with collective trauma healing. After all, it does not help much in the long term to heal a single individual, while the collective and the institutions in which that individual lives and functions retain their inherent violent and traumatizing nature. More research, engagement and collective action is called for between these approaches. Alfred Kibunja, a trained psychologist and peacebuilders notes that there needs to be more dialogue and engagement between the fields of individualized mental health and collective trauma healing given the reality that one-on-one counseling is not sufficient in addressing the large mass people who need healing.

6. **Strengthening the institution of eldership.** Veteran journalist Mitch Odero and elder Major Seii (current chair of the Kalenjin Council of Elders), amongst others, called for the redefinition and strengthening of the institution of eldership. While acknowledging that the institution had historically been mis-used, they nevertheless recommended that since elders continue to serve in spite of mal-functioning systems, civil society needs to support processes of revitalizing the institution.

7. **Restorative Approaches to Justice and Healing.** As Philip Ochieng’, a peace worker with PeaceNet, posed: when we raise the voices of justice, are we prepared to temper it with an offer for mercy? The modern judicial systems tend to emphasize the technical definition of guilt and punishment. Yet African indigenous judicial systems emphasized personal and collective accountability when crime was committed. In a January 1998 article comparing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (of South Africa) and the International Criminal Court (for Rwanda), Babu Ayindo raised the problematic questions regarding the quest for justice. Drawing from Howard Zerh’s seminal text *Changing Lenses*, the author raised several questions we need to consider when pursuing justice. These include: (a) is crime merely a violation of the state and its laws or is it essentially a violation

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of people and relationships?; (b) should justice focus on establishing guilt or should it focus on identifying needs and obligations?; (c) should we aim to mete out doses of pain as punishment to the guilty or should we aim to see things made right?; (d) should we seek justice through a conflict of adversaries in which the offender is pitted against the state or ought we encourage dialogue and mutual understanding giving victims and offenders central roles?; (e) and should the rules and intentions outweigh outcomes or should we judge the efficacy of our justice system by the extent to which responsibilities are assumed, needs are met and healing of individuals and relationships is encouraged?

8. **A regime of respect and inclusivity in political culture.** An enduring lamentation is the need for respect of all communities in their diversity in the manner the country conducts its politics and decision making. Several respondents were emphatic that, like neglected children, communities that feel denigrated and excluded would always find ways, that are not necessarily peaceful, to remind the rest of the country of their presence and space. The new constitution provides several opportunities to advance a regime of respect. That regime of respect needs to be promoted at all level of society. Civil society is best placed to advance this quest.

**Focus on the children:** Many peace initiatives tend to focus on adults. And even when they focus on children, the tendency is to assume that children are small adults. Some respondents were particularly surprised by the level of ‘conflict illiteracy’ with which the Ministry of Education dealt with the spate of violence in schools following the post-election violence. For the community the researchers interviewed the link between the violence culture of the adults and the violence mirrored in schools was simple and clear yet the Ministry of Education began by blaming gadgets such as DSTVs for the rising violence in schools. It is critical that a special focus on Children in peacebuilding and trauma healing is important at home, in schools and in the wider community.

Historically, Africans have demonstrated that they are a resilient people. Nowhere is this most evident than in the work of their children. Only 8 months after post-election violence, June Ndeti (of Save the Children,
UK) and Caroline Wandugu and Ruth Gichengi (Hope for Women network) were already talking of “kids coming back to normal. They are crying for peace; they keep blaming the parents [...] Already kids are drawing pictures that are multi-ethnic. Problem is the parents; the education they get at home continues to raise tension and anxiety.”

9. **Taking advantage of the new constitution.** The document provides several opportunities for healing and rebuilding. Peace workers also need to be aware of the clauses that might generate conflict and proactively plan for programs to address these. In chapter ten on ‘Judicial Authority and Legal System’, for example, the constitution provides that “alternative forms of dispute resolution including reconciliation, mediation, arbitration and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms shall be promoted, subject to clause (3).” The constitution also introduces a devolved and proportional representation format of elections that is more inclusive and representative than the First Past and the Post system that has been used in centralizing power on individuals. The chapter on Leadership and Integrity also provides a framework not just for public officers but also leadership systems in other levels of society.

10. **Documentation of Narratives of Solidarity.** The stories about the people who helped each other, regardless of ethnic descent have not been fully told. Part of the challenge is that such people were, and perhaps are still, considered as traitors. These narratives need to be documented. Wherever, we conducted FGDs, when we asked if there were people who helped each other across ethnic lines, a list was easily generated. There is need to counter the dominant narratives about post-election violence. This is what the Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Adichie terms as the ‘dangers of a single story.’ In Kenya, there seems to be penchant for following the single story crafted by politicians.

11. **Re-writing history.** The reality is that the period following violent conflict is riddled with conflict narratives each trying to advance its course. In a fragile transitional context such as Kenya finds herself, this can remain a potent force for relapse to violence. In an informal chat in the course of this study, a history teacher in secondary education said...
school led us to consider how the history curriculum contributes to the ideology of ownership, entitlement and potential violence. The history of migration of Kenya’s peoples talks of how various nations arrived out of Kenya and settled in specific provinces, leading to a strong sense of entitlement. That history does not speak of how people from other provinces found their way into say, the Rift Valley province. We need an intentional effort on the curriculum developers to critically review and re-write the history of Kenya in a manner that engenders peace, justice, unity, liberty so that indeed plenty can be found not just within our borders but the region. As one respondent put it: “we must overcome the fear of dealing with history.”

12. *Linking trauma healing, peacebuilding and development:* For both government agencies and civil society, we need to appreciate as Clancy and Hamber assert that peacebuilding, development and trauma healing of political conflict are intertwined. In other words, “we cannot adequately address trauma without placing it at the heart of wider peacebuilding initiatives and development programmes, and vice versa.” The status of research clearly indicates that leaders and managers of development and peacebuilding need to make the theoretical and practical.

World Vision provides a good example. Kantowitz and Riak demonstrate how, indeed, “peacebuilding, trauma healing, and development and the practices associated with them inherently overlap because they share a set of fundamental core values: meeting basic human needs, promoting human rights, and eliminating structural and over violence.”

Government and civil society initiatives need to appreciate the element of process in healing. Traditional systems did not function on a “quick fix” approach. People knew it would take a while. Nowadays, people intervene with the system of budgets and projects. People try to sort out historical grievances within budget lines. We need also to open spaces of dialogue and engagement with the Private sector.

13. **Changing the ‘doing’ paradigm.** Both governments and CSOs are in general driven by what Ditcher calls the ‘doing’ paradigm that mainly focuses on the tangible, measureable material things. Put differently, both government agencies and CSOs tend to focus on what can be counted rather than what counts. In post-conflict situations focusing only on the material can actually maintain the dynamics of trauma and dependency. Indeed, Ditcher contends that:

> increasingly we know that the real keys to development are neither tangible nor much “doing.” They are about institutions, attitudes, laws and human resources [...] If development was successful in fostering institutions, attitudes and laws and in enhancing human resources, we – as professional developers – would not have to do things like build schools and roads. The institution of a functioning society would see to it that they got built.”

In our view, this prophetic call was made almost three decades ago by the Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah. While the postcolonial state invested on material things, he clearly saw the need of healing of souls as equally critical. To a large degree the lack of healing of souls accounts for the dysfunctional societies the postcolonial state has created.

14. **Mass Confession and ‘National Cleansing.’** Kimani Njogu of Twaweza Communications called for mass confessions. Citing examples from other societies, Njogu proposes a national process that would involve all citizens at various levels to undergo a ‘national cleansing’ ceremony. The task is to avoid spiritualizing the pain. In some religious spaces, victims are made to feel as if what happened to them was a pre-ordained curse. Civil society led processed need to de-bunk this superstition and offer individuals and communities genuine spaces of healing and possible reconciliation.

15. **Memorialization.** The refrain “in our community, men do not cry” is still very pervasive. It even goes beyond that; there are some pains that an individual is not supposed to talk about for fear of breaking

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75 Cited in Kantowitz and Riak “Critical Links Between Peacebuilding and Trauma Healing” In Hart (ed), *Peacebuilding In Traumatized Societies*, 10 and 11
the honor of the community in the eyes of others. There are cases, where due to culture of politicization, individuals are expected to ‘suffer peacefully.’ For the individual communities to begin the journey of healing, there needs to be openness in expressing the pain, as it was done in traditional societies. Space has to be created for men to memorialize in a manner that enhances healing.

16. **De-oathing and rituals of healing.** One of the most problematic topics during the research was the question of rituals of healing. It would seem that Christianity resulted in a strong duality of worship particularly during crisis. Outwardly, the respondents talked of the need to ‘move on’ and abandon the rituals of healing and cleansing. In informal conversations they talked of rituals, including oathing and de-oathing that are happening to date, particularly at the family level. For instance, after the post-election violence, some young men in various parts of the country have secretly requested elders and spiritual leaders to conduct cleaning rituals for they realize that: (a) they transgressed when they committed violent acts outside the traditional protocols of war; (b) they returned to the community without cleaning thus contaminating the entire community; and (c) they are experiencing a sense of imbalance, guilt and shame. The question is for religious institutions to recognize that the rituals of healing and symbolic reparations are very much part of the traditions and culture and do not contravene the fundamental teaching of Christianity. For instance, is it not possible to creatively open space within religious settings for integrated rituals of healing to be undertaken? For government and civil society organizations, the challenge would be to research, learn from, and work with communities to adapt some of the rituals of healing.

17. **A regime of respect and inclusivity in political culture.** As mentioned in chapter 2, an enduring lamentation is the need for respect of all communities in their diversity in the manner we conduct politics and decision making. Communities that feel denigrated and excluded would find ways, that are not necessarily peaceful, to remind the rest of the country of their presence and space. The new constitution provides several opportunities to
advance a regime of respect. That regime of respect needs to be promoted at all level of society.

18. **Reviewing the ‘Hidden Curriculum.’** Schools need to become learning stations for diversity, respect and mirror the future society we collectively desire. A number of respondents noted that the school system had a ‘hidden curriculum’ where notions of ethnic superiority, entitlement and denigration of other people were silently passed on to innocent children. The peace education curriculum already being piloted can serve as a basis of strengthening both the ‘taught’ and ‘hidden’ curricular that advances a culture of peace.

The transformation in the school system need not be limited to the peace education curriculum. Teacher trainings need to lay emphasis that all subjects can be taught with peace as a value orientation. More importantly, since the school is a microcosm of the entire society, the school culture needs to mirror the culture of peace that we desire. This would imply a fundamental shift in the ways schools are led and managed and the significant role of the pupil/student in the development of the culture of peace.

19. **The role of artists and writers** needs to be emphasized as they serve as the custodians of memory. The stories they tell can lead to us to peace or violence, including the media. Artists, journalists and other communicators can use the power of their resources to deepen the levels of analysis and transcend stereotypes that keep people in their silos of hatred, fear and insecurity.

20. **Let men be men.** Several times, respondents bemoaned the diminishing role of men in society. Kimani Njogu sees it as a crisis of parenting in families, communities and the larger society. Conversations and dialogues need to happen to review and clarify what kind of parenting would ensure a responsible next generation is raised. A good starting point would be for religious institutions and CSOs to provide space for boys and men to reflect on what it means to be a man in a changing environment. Again, Were’s book on male disempowerment would be
a valuable resource in this regard. We could also draw learning from Padare/Enkundleni in Zimbabwe, a men’s initiative that provides a forum for men to reexamine notions of masculinity in order to initiate change in their sexual behaviour and in their relationships with women. Padare argues that prevailing notions of male roles and behavior can be changed, both through open dialogue with women and through critical self-examination by men themselves.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{21.} The study suggests that we have the resources to develop an integrated approach to national and community healing that combines Rights-based, Culture-based and Gender based dimension to healing. The last word in this discussion of seeking to break the cycles of violence and impunity is left to Sammy Chemwei:

\textit{What we need is not so much new institutions or frameworks but a change in culture: from a culture of violence to a culture of peace and nonviolence across the society. We have to start from personal; get people to believe in nonviolence as a way of life then move upwards to inter-personal and community to just shift people from finger pointing to more self-reflection. Over time with a culture of nonviolence, upholding democratic ideals, including everyone, respecting for human rights, valuing life would be effortless. In so doing, we shall not be doing anything radically new, we shall only be respecting the ideals of those who founded this nation.}\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{76} See http://www.comminit.com/en/node/271813/38
\textsuperscript{77} Phone Interview 27 May 2010
IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

Though outside medicines and traditional healing may be necessary, it is still the body itself that must return to health and keep itself healthy.

Kai Brand-Jacobsen and Carl Jacobsen
As Erick Oyugi pointed out in the preface, this study is a work in progress. In that spirit, we cannot speak of a “concluding chapter.” Our hope is that the paragraphs you have read thus far can, and should, raise new questions and new dilemmas. The internal logic of this study was not to provide answers but raise new questions for those involved in trauma healing, peacebuilding and economic empowerment. As the study suggest, the journey to collective trauma healing has only began.

In this regard, perhaps the most important lesson the researchers took out of the entire research process is that the respondents recognized that there is a problem; that this is not the country they would like to bequeath to generations to come; and above all, that we had the capacity to make bold decisions. In several interviews, respondents alluded to the lost dream, envisioned by the founding Mothers and Fathers of Kenya; dreams well captured in the lyrics of the first stanza of the national anthem.

In summary therefore, the direct violence – erroneously termed as tribal – witnessed during the PEV is only a small part of the narrative. Beneath the direct violence were structures and systems of governance that nurture direct violence or even make it virtually inevitable. In turn, structures and systems that engender violence are designed around certain beliefs, norms and values that justify violence and oppression. Kai Brand-Jacobsen notes that structural violence is difficult to recognize and understand as it is “built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world.” In other words, structures are designed to determine “the different allocation of goods, resources, opportunities, between different groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc, because of the structures governing their relationship.” Healing has to happen at all the levels: direct, structural and cultural.

If indeed the PEV was direct violence that found expression through durable structures and systems of governance which

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are in turn fed by cultural violence, the fundamental question for the peacebuilders as Kai Brand-Jacobsen is straightforward: if cultural violence exists, does, cultural peace also exist? If we have structural violence, is it not possible to build institutions that promote structural peace?

In other words, is the essential task of peacebuilding, therefore, transforming mindsets, narratives, belief systems, values and histories upon which structures of governance and social relationships are built? It is our view that at the heart of most of the contemporary conflicts is the question of fear. Peace workers need to find ways to address the fears that have historically shaped mindsets and belief systems of various collectivities that make Kenya.

Fortunately, the lyrics of the founding Mothers and founding Fathers provide sufficient inspiration. In addition, in the course of the study we learned of initiatives by ordinary men and women to build a culture of peace and nonviolence through community dialogues and activities. Most of the initiatives were modest, drawing on local resources.

Indeed, it is our view that the task of healing and peacebuilding is a collective one. As Prof William Ury once pointed out, everyone is a ‘third sider.’ But for us to be able to transform our destructive conflict into constructive conflict (at home, at work, in the community and in the world), we need to be a mobilized community, acting systematically and motivated by a new story.

It is our evidence that Kenya badly needs a new story. Within the framework of the study and outside, we have asked many citizens what they think would be a new story capable of mobilizing everyone to act systematically for peace. To date our question meets with silence. Or, at best, we hear the old recycled stereotypes derived from the dominant political narratives about this community. What this study shows us is that these narratives would only lead us to another cycle of violence.
Fortunately, in the course of the study, the researchers noted a commitment by majority of respondents to build a better country. More importantly, there seems to exist a generation of young people who are not interested in the old narratives that camouflage real issues under the tired labels of ethnicity.

We are not in doubt that the Kenyan people, individually and collectively bear the capacity to heal the nation. And that is a task that cannot be postponed to the next generation.
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Notes