

## **Evaluating the strategies employed by informal peace committees in peace building in Nairobi County**

Authors - Gacaga Peter Mungai, Prof Crispinous Iteyo and Dr. Janet Kassilly

Department of peace and conflict studies Masinde Muliro University of science and Technology

### **ABSTRACT**

#### **Background**

In recent years, informal peace committees have rapidly made their mark either as precautionary or as response mechanisms to particular conflicts. The main purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of informal peace committees in peace building in Nairobi County, Kenya since 1990

#### **Objective**

To evaluate the strategies employed by informal peace committees in peace building in Nairobi County

#### **Method**

To accomplish this, the study population consisted of 1260 and a sample size of 509 respondents involved in peace building provided feedback on the effectiveness of informal peace committees. The study collected primary data from interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires, while secondary data was collected from various databases. The study generated both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics data analysis method was applied to analyze numerical data gathered using closed ended questions. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics by use of SPSS programme

#### **Results**

The study findings revealed that despite several challenges faced by informal peace committees, they have demonstrated their ability to prevent the eruption or escalation of nascent micro-level conflict into violent and more widespread conflicts

#### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that informal peace committees are often small and simple initiatives, yet effective and sustainable. They are small in that they do not involve official bureaucratic structures, but are local structures that are developed from within the community. Such initiatives are usually guided by culture specific cultural norms and values and that is what makes them more local but legitimate in their host communities. The strengths of community-led initiatives are that they address the community's basic needs and challenges and can be replicated.

## **Introduction**

The study is part of a larger research project, which was designed using Descriptive statistics data analysis method was applied to analyze numerical data gathered using closed ended questions. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics by use of SPSS programme. The central objective of this study was to examine the extent to which informal peace committees can effectively contribute to peace building in Nairobi County.. The paper is structured as follows: the Background and study locale section describes the context and study location. The Peace building theory' section reviews peace building theory. The Literature review section reviews literature on peace building and the comparative advantages of peace committees over other formations. The Research process describes the data collection procedures. The Results and discussion presents and analyses data. The Concluding remarks sums up the entire study.

## **Background and study locale**

Building lasting peace in the aftermath of a conflict is one of the biggest development challenges of our time. By most accounts, more than 50 per cent of countries emerging from civil war revert to violent conflict after a brief period of peace (Barbara Walter, 2014). This means that countries mired in war tend to find themselves in a situation known as the conflict trap. That is, societies that have experienced one civil war are more likely to experience a second or third war than are societies with no prior history of war (Hegre *et al.*, 2011). Yet, despite the virus of post-conflict relapse, a systematic analysis of the literature and empirical evidence show that there is a remarkable variation in the fates of states following civil war. While some became trapped in an intractable cycle of war and lawlessness, others have managed to sustain peace and even experience democratic consolidation after the end of conflicts.

Kenya has since the adoption of multi party politics in the early 1990s tried various peace building initiatives aimed at fostering cohesion and integration which can help reduce and prevent violence and ultimately reconcile the Kenyan people without success. The country has experienced violence especially during election cycles exposing deep rooted issues which have not been addressed in the past. The country remained polarized due to a combination of historical grievances including; unequal distribution of national resources, entrenched politics of exclusion and patronage, weak national institutions among other issues. This problem has been attributed to a cleavage between peace building processes at the local and national levels. The actors at the local level are only considered useful as victims of conflict and/or recipients of humanitarian aid, making the process of peace an activity that concerns state actors and political elites.

Nairobi has experienced all sorts of violence and conflicts associated to all manner of reasons (Mbugua, 2013). This includes social fragmentation, politicized ethnicity, and partisan politics, where political entrepreneurs use ethnic affiliation to manipulate ethnic grievances. This has been the basis for political mobilization to gain power and control over resources. Corruption and impunity which has severely compromised the security sector, while impunity and lack of justice legitimize violence and lead to revenge attacks. Land and development projects, inequity in land ownership and access cause widespread grievances, as do development projects that are not delivered in a conflict-sensitive manner. Discrimination and marginalization of certain groups and areas have faced long-term discrimination and marginalization, which has been exploited by violent extremists. This has provided more opportunities for violence and wider insecurity and in the long run hampers the process of peace building.

There are various peace building intervention mechanisms that have been touted as the best including bottom-up approach or top-down approach (Gastrwo, 1995). Informal peace committees are intervention mechanisms at village, town or regional level which are often considered transitional mechanisms that use bottom-up approach in their peace building. These practices and policies, as internationalized as they may be, do not work. What explains this variation? In other words, how and why do some conflicts end in a peace that endures while other conflicts reignite? Although academicians and development practitioners have vigorously debated this question relying on statistical as well as qualitative methods, there is still quite limited knowledge about how to re-establish sustainable peace after a conflict. It is against this background that the study was undertaken to fill the missing knowledge gap by examining the efficacy of informal peace committee's in peace building in Nairobi County, Kenya, since 1990.

The city stands at Latitude and Longitude of 1.2833, 36.8167 respectively and GPS coordinates of 1° 16' 59.9880" S and 36° 49' 0.0120" E. The study specifically focused on the period since 1990. Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, is the most dynamic city, also known as the "**green city in the sun**" for many reasons. It is Kenya's largest city with a population of nearly four million. It's a city that blends people from all cultures and walks of life. As the largest center of business and trade in East Africa, Nairobi is also the regional location of and headquarters for various international companies and organizations. The central business district also houses many of Kenya's big businesses and banks, including the Nairobi Stock Exchange. Being the center of government and its organizations, Nairobi is the city where most business is transacted in Kenya

Figure 1 Location of Nairobi County in Kenya



Prepared by: The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: Cartography/GIS Section:  
Source: 2009 Population Census

This map is not an authority on delineation of boundaries

## **Peace Building Theory**

(Michael Barnett et al. 2007), argued that peace, is creating the conditions under which individuals in society can benefit from coherent legal frameworks, public order, political stability, and economic opportunities. Building lasting peace in the aftermath of a conflict is one of the biggest development challenges of our time. By most accounts, more than 50 per cent of countries emerging from civil war revert to violent conflict after a brief period of peace (Barbara Walter, 2014). Restorative Justice Theory in criminal justice was coined by Albert Eglash, (1977). Restorative justice is a system or practice which emphasizes the healing of wounds suffered by victims, offenders, and communities that are caused or revealed by offending conduct. With restorative justice, parties with a stake in a criminal offence (including the offender, the victim, and the communities of each) collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the criminal act with an emphasis on repairing the harm from that act. Restorative justice is an approach to justice in which the response to a crime is to organize a meeting between the victim and the offender, sometimes with representatives of the wider community. The goal is for them to share their experience of what happened, to discuss who was harmed by the crime and how, and to create a consensus for what the offender can do to repair the harm from the offense. This may include a payment of money given from the offender to the victim, apologies and other amends, and other actions to compensate those affected and to prevent the offender from causing future harm.

A restorative justice program aims to get offenders to take responsibility for their actions, to understand the harm they have caused, to give them an opportunity to redeem them and to discourage them from causing further harm. For victims, its goal is to give them an active role in the process, and to reduce feelings of anxiety and powerlessness. Restorative justice is founded on an alternative theory to the traditional methods of justice, which often focus on retribution. However, restorative justice programs can complement traditional methods. According to (Gavrielides, 2007), Restorative Justice Theory was first introduced in the 1970s in the contemporary criminal justice literature and practice. Restorative justice is a new movement in the fields of victimology and criminology, which acknowledges that crime, causes injury to people and communities. Restorative justice theory is seen as providing a more holistic approach rather than separating the legal or criminal justice from the larger picture of distributive justice the way in which wealth, power and status are apportioned in our society. In determining how the law should be applied most fairly, restorative justice focuses on the needs of the victim, the offender and the community, taking into consideration accompanying social, economic and political factors.

(Liebmann, 2007 ), stated that Restorative Justice Theory as the principles to resolve conflicts and repair harm. It encourages those who have caused harm to acknowledge the impact of what they have done and gives them an opportunity to make the reparation. It offers those who have suffered harm the opportunity to have their harm or loss acknowledged and amends made. Restorative Justice emphasis is on working against injustice in the most restorative way one can manage. (Marshall, 1999), argued that the commonly accepted definition of Restorative Justice is that Restorative Justice is a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offence collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future. It strives to

attend fully to the needs of the victim, materially, emotionally and socially, to prevent re-offending by integrating offenders into the community, to enable the offenders to assume active responsibility for their actions, to re-create a working community that supports the rehabilitation of the offenders and the victims in the aim of preventing crimes, and to provide a means of avoiding intensification of legal justice and the associated costs and delays.

Marshal noted that Restorative Justice as justice that aims to restore the well being of the victims, offenders and communities damaged by crimes and to prevent further offending. In restorative justice processes, the offender takes responsibility for their actions and the victim may take the vital role of receiving the apology and reparation directly or indirectly from the offender. This means that the Restorative Justice process fosters dialogue between the offender and the victim and aims at victim satisfaction, true accountability by the offender, as well as reduced re-offending. He further argued that Restorative Justice provides a problem-solving approach to crime and involves the parties themselves and the community generally in an active relationship with statutory agencies. It differs from the other contemporary criminal justice processes in a number of ways. It views criminal acts more comprehensively rather than defining crime simply as breaking the law. It goes deeper into the root causes of the offence and in understanding the reasons why the offenders acted as they did. It recognizes the harm caused to the victims, communities and even to the offenders themselves. Restorative Justice involves more parties in responding to the crimes. Rather than giving the key roles only to the government and the offender, it includes the victims and their communities. It also measures successes differently. Rather than measuring how much punishment is inflicted retributive it measures how much harm is repaired or prevented.

Restorative Justice Theory in criminal justice was very useful in helping the study on how peace building initiatives are discussed and pursued, particularly in contexts of political, ethnic, religious, resource-related, and gender-based violence. Through this theory, the study was able to establish principles of peace building through reducing reoffending, increasing satisfaction rates, and preventing crime in the first place. The theory was able to help the study understand the very critical issues, for example the involvement of victims and offenders. The involvement of the victim leads to a greater accountability from the offender. It is difficult for offenders to make excuses and to retreat behind a shell in the face of victims recounting the often devastating impact of the offence. Offenders more often express real remorse, which is a key step to their own journey away from crime and to the healing of the wounds suffered by victims. According to Morris, Restorative Justice Theory had its own shortcomings which includes: Restorative justice erodes legal rights; restorative justice results in net-widening; restorative justice trivializes crime (particularly men's violence against women); restorative justice fails to "restore" victims and offenders; restorative justice fails to effect real change and to prevent recidivism; restorative justice results in discriminatory outcomes; restorative justice extends police powers; restorative justice leaves power imbalances untouched; restorative justice leads to vigilantism; restorative justice lacks legitimacy; and restorative justice fails to provide justice.

**Literature review**

(Lederach, 2005), observed that informal peace committees play an integral role in peace building process. The government of the affected country is not only the object of peace building, but also the subject. While peace building aims to transform various government structures, the government typically oversees and engages in this reconstruction process. Informal peace committees must contribute their expertise to help carry out peace building initiatives. The religious networks can partner with local peace committees in establishing social and moral norms. Other external parties typically should also play a crucial role in advancing such peace building efforts. Few peace building plans work unless regional neighbors and other significant international actors support peace through economic development aid and humanitarian relief. At international levels, international organizations can intervene at the government level to transform established structures. They not only provide monetary support to post-conflict governments, but also assist in the restoration of financial and political institutions. Because their efforts carry the legitimacy of the international community, they can be quite effective.

(Michael Henderson, 1996) observed that one of the major challenges we continue to face at the close of the twentieth century is the achievement of genuine reconciliation and lasting world peace. In the past, the effects of war were limited, but today our potential for destruction is beyond imagination. In many parts of the world, local and regional conflicts are causing misery to millions, and have potentially far-reaching global consequences. Kenya, especially since the political crisis of the early 1990s has not been an exception to the above phenomenon. There have been various attempts to peace building initiatives aimed at enhancing cohesion and integration which can help reduce and prevent violence and ultimately reconcile the Kenyan people by promoting peace and mutual understanding among communities. However, despite all the attempts to prevent violent conflicts or reduce it, foster cohesion and integration, reconciliation, and create mutual understanding among the Kenyan people, the country has not been able to enjoy positive peace, more so Nairobi County. Nairobi County has experienced violent conflicts especially during election cycles exposing deep rooted issues which have not been addressed in the past.

(Tongeren, (2013b)), argued that most informal peace committees were established locally because indigenous communities felt threatened by the flourishing violence, and the lack of justice in their society. He added that, due to the frequent violence and chaos in many rural and urban settings, and the delay in intervening during violence by the appropriate state agencies, local people took troubles into their hands, by finding a participatory method of resolving conflict or preventing violence, hence the formation of local peace committees. Among the major features of all informal peace committees including Nairobi includes; an encouragement of active community participation by bringing the conflicting parties together, fighting against marginalization and discrimination to promote community empowerment and capacity building, and inspiring community level peace initiative ownership to promote the sustainability of peace projects. In effect, the informal peace committees in Nairobi by its nature are inclusive of the different sections of the community that are in conflict and have the task to promote peace within its own environs.

(Butt, 2004), presented a powerful image of the restoration of the ordinary in the midst of mindboggling chaos; of making community life possible again. (Ningbabira 2006) highlighted the case of North Eastern part of Kenya the story of the Wajir peace and development committee was established by a group of women who were deeply concerned and affected by the ongoing negative effect of inter-clan strife by pastoralist peoples who faced desperate competition for water in a drought-stricken region. It achieved remarkable results and soon inspired the spread of similar informal peace committees across the region. It was an outstanding example of the empowerment, in this case of women, that joint conflict transformation activity provided. (Ombati, 2013), argued that since the early 1990s when Kenya adopted multi-party politics, it has tried various peace building initiatives aimed at fostering cohesion and integration which can help reduce and prevent violence and ultimately reconcile the Kenyan people by promoting peace and mutual understanding among communities. However, despite all the attempts to prevent violence or reduce it, foster cohesion and integration, reconciliation, and create mutual understanding among the Kenyan people, the country has not been able to enjoy positive peace. The country has experienced violence especially during election cycles exposing deep rooted issues which have not been addressed in the past. Amstutz (2006), noted that the country remained polarized due to a combination of historical grievances including; unequal distribution of national resources, entrenched politics of exclusion and patronage, weak national institutions among other issues.

(Ombati, 2013), further stated that there was a wide acknowledgement of the ubiquity and importance of locally led peace building initiatives in violent conflict areas in Kenya. Informal peace building programs were usually designed to include a clear understanding of the social, religious, cultural, philosophical, economic and political dynamics of local communities. Understanding local dynamics informs the planning of peace building programs and, therefore was a condition for their sustainability. Peace building initiatives in Nairobi are usually more relevant to their target population, taking into account pressing needs, as opposed to top-down interventions by foreign actors. Local initiatives are accorded high priority by citizens, and investment in them is often cost effective as they build on what already exists locally. Grass root peace building interventions in Nairobi has fostered mutual self-help, relevance, and sustainability. He further argued that peace building policies and conflict resolution must be sensitive to local and regional conflict dynamics, particularly when intervention measures and strategies are designed and implemented

(Cox et al., 2014), observed that while the various different social conflicts across Kenya may initially seem disconnected, they are in fact closely linked to the nature of social fragmentation in Kenya and its deep and persistent fault lines Ethnic group affiliation is the primary identity of many Kenyans, especially during periods of turmoil . This is a result of ethnic identity being the social sphere in which citizens tend to feel most secure, and because ethnicity shapes people's perceptions of fear and power. Levels of trust erode among ethnic groups in situations of economic and/or political instability, especially when they are in opposing political camps, as determined by elite coalitions. (Scott-Villers et al., 2014,), noted that the roots of some of the violence in Kenya lie in the struggles to influence the balance of power and the distribution of economic resources in Kenya The levels of violence vary from place to place, and year to year, but remain persistent and

combined with politics. Partisan politics appears to be the 'most prominent trigger of conflict'. The different political settlements in Kenya's history have been marked by widespread political violence along ethnic and class lines. In the period's in-between, the violence is more criminal violence and low level disputes, although these are often ethnicized. Political entrepreneurs use ethnic affiliation and manipulate ethnic grievances as the basis for political mobilization.

(Sharamo, 2014), observed that in one of the study found four dynamics of persistent violence in Kenya including a struggle for the fruits of devolution, even to the extent of sabotaging the use of violence to shift voter constituencies *en masse* violent attempts to prevent the other group or groups from gaining a share of the economy, and the production of ethnic identity through a system of economic preference and clientelism. The tactic of using violence to drive away potential opposition voters has been used at the coast, in the Rift Valley, and in pastoralist dry lands, for example. Most of the displaced were never resettled or compensated and most perpetrators of inter-communal conflicts were never prosecuted; which 'seemed to legitimize violence as a tool of determining electoral outcomes'. Often the incentives for violence in terms of political gains are stronger than those for peace. The violence is said to operate in a way that constantly undermines any positive institutional initiative that may try to amend the system

The reviewed literature demonstrated the need to develop strategies that would promote mutual understanding amongst and help create dialogue as a central mechanism within the social integration process. It emerged that fundamentally, there are two main approaches to peace building have been used in the past and are still in use in recent times to transform post-conflict countries. They are the western/conventional and the indigenous/traditional approaches to peace building. The western/conventional approaches to peace building referred to the use of external bodies and systems to transform countries recovering from civil wars, violent conflicts and natural disasters. It was also defined as the use of formal and external bodies and structures in attempting to end a conflict (Richmond, *et.al*, 2009), observed that the prevailing paradigm of western/conventional approaches to peace building, liberal peace building and liberal internationalism referred to the transformation of war shattered states into market democratic states and holding an immediate democratic election.

However, the literature review didn't demonstrate how the western conventional approaches to peace building could identify the structural cause of a conflict using elements such as mediation, truth-saying, joint problem solving, rituals, negotiation and others from within the African context to promote sustainable peace. While western conventional approaches to peace building are based on a top bottom approach, to interrogate informal peace committees, this study advocated for the indigenous or African approach which is based on a bottom up approach. The approach sets local ownership which priorities suggest a reorientation of approach that more highly values the need for home-grown solutions to conflict problems and for partnerships to be locally driven. The study was possible by the fact that it was quite participative all through from the design to implementation stages. It strived to fill the gap on how informal peace committees could build peace in a bottom-up approach in the cosmopolitan city of Nairobi.

### The Research process

The overall objective of this study was to evaluate the strategies employed by informal peace committees in peace building in Nairobi County using descriptive methodology. This design was considered relevant in relation to the study objectives. The design helped the study achieve its research purpose of describing, explaining, and validating the findings. It was particularly important in linking research with actions that bring the social, political and economic change. The participants were observed in their natural environments without interfering with their activities and behaviors. This allowed for a multifaceted approach to data collection and analysis.

The design chosen involved measurement, classification analysis comparison and interpretation of data. In this method, information was obtained using questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews to a sample of individuals selected randomly rather than the entire population. The study population comprised of eight categories of respondents, those from the political class, professionals, business community, peace committee members, religious leaders, government officials, civil society, and finally, the women and the marginalized groups. The tabulation of the study population is made in Table 1 sampling frame of the study population

**Table 1 Sampling frame of the study population**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Target population</b>
peace committees members	330
Political Leaders	244
Women and the marginalized groups	595
Business community	600
Professionals	60
Religious leaders	95
Government officials	156
Civil society officials	80
Libraries, repositories, published works, journals, databases	
<b>TOTAL</b>	2160

Given that the study population was high, the study developed a sampling frame where a list of all the respondents relevant to the study was made. To accomplish this, the study was based on a target population of 2160 respondents, and a sample size of 509. Simple random sampling was used in all the 85 wards in Nairobi County to extract the samples in all eight categories. Simple random sampling was considered unbiased, inclusive and each unit had an equal chance of being included in the sample (Benedetti, et al, 2010).

**Table 2 Summary of the sampling method**

Category	Target population	Sample proportion	Sampling method	Sample size
peace committees members	330	75	Simple random sampling	22.7%
Political Leaders	244	51	Simple random sampling	20.9%
Women and the marginalized groups	595	142	Simple random sampling	23.9%
Business community	600	148	Simple random sampling.	24.7%
Professionals	60	13	Simple random sampling	21.7%
Religious leaders	95	21	Simple random sampling	22.1%
Government officials	156	40	Simple random sampling	25.6%
Civil society officials	80	19	Simple random sampling	23.8%
Libraries, repositories, published works, journals, databases				
<b>TOTAL</b>	2160	509		23.6%

Source: Author (2018)

The sample size comprised of 51 Political leaders representing 20.9% of the target population, 75 Peace committee members representing 22.7% of the target population. 40 Government officials representing 25.6%, 19 Civil society officials representing 23.8% of the target population, 13 Professionals representing 21.7% of the target population, 21 Religious leaders representing 22.1% of the target population, 148 Members of the business community representing 24.7% of the target population, 142 Women and marginalized groups including the youth representing 23.9% of the target population. According to (Kothari, 2009), when the population is more than 10,000 participants, the formula below can be used to calculate the target population:

The sample size was computed using the formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where;

n= the desired sample size (if the target population is greater than 10,000)

z= the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level of 99% =2.58

p= the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristics being measured estimated at 0.5

q= 1-p

d= the level of statistical significance set at 0.05

This gives  $n_0=666$ . Since the target population was 2160 the adjusted sample size was obtained using the formula

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0-1)}{N}} = \frac{666}{1 + \frac{(666-1)}{2160}} = 509$$

The study was based on a sample population of 509 respondents, out of a study population of 2160. The sample was distributed as follows;

These were the samples used in the collection of data in order to provide the information required. This represented a small portion taken from the larger population. This had sufficiently surpassed the minimum threshold sample size recommended by Gay (2005) that a sample size of the target population is regarded as adequate for small population ( $N \leq 1000$ ) Mugenda, (2008). According to Kothari, (2009), when the population is more than 10,000 participants, the formula below was used to calculate the target population. The study had therefore sufficiently surpassed the minimum threshold sample size recommended by Gay (2003)

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where;

$n$ = the desired sample size(if the target population is greater than 10,000)

$z$ = the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level

$p$ = the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristics being measured

$q$ =  $1-p$

$d$ = the level of statistical significance set.

$Z^2 = 2.58$ <if  $\alpha=0.05$ > level of significance

This means that the response rate may affect the number of people you send your survey to. The higher the response rate, the fewer people you need to ask to take your survey.

The study employed several data collection instruments including, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions as primary sources while repositories, peace and conflict journals and databases formed part of the secondary data collected. The questionnaires were administered to the women, youth and the marginalized groups, and the business community where primary data was collected. However, the questionnaires were not conclusive in gathering the data required and therefore, the need for other methods. The study considered interviews as key qualitative data collection method for the collection of primary data. There were many reasons for the use of interviews in the collection of data as a research instrument. First, they were mainly useful in attaining highly personalized data, as well as providing the opportunities for probing to get underlying factors, and also became a viable option where there were limited respondents.

The main advantage of the interviews stemmed from their capability to offer a complete description and analysis of the research subject, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participant's responses. The Interviews were thus useful for gaining insight and context into the research topic. From the onset, the interviews facilitated the accurate screening for the right interviewee while seeking complete description and analysis of the subject matter. The interviewer

sought the right individuals who had the desired information. While the interviews enabled the study to reach the limits of the interviewee's knowledge, it encouraged co-operation and helped to establish rapport. The interviews targeted the political leaders, government officials and the civil society officials.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used a method of data collection to collect primary data. The main goal of Focus Group Discussion was to provide an opportunity for the participants to talk to one another about the study topic where the facilitator/researcher guided the discussions. The focus group discussions involved members of the informal peace committees, nyumba kumi initiative members and the local administrators mostly chiefs and assistant chiefs. The study had five focus group discussions in five different constituencies drawn across Nairobi County. The focus group discussions were mainly held in chief's office and comprised not more than twelve members in any one sitting. I collected secondary data from Libraries, repositories, published and unpublished works, journals, and databases on peace building. Secondary data provided a baseline for primary research in comparing the collected primary data results and it was also helpful in research design.

Data analysis was guided by the research objectives presented. The study generated both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics data analysis method was applied to analyze numerical data gathered using closed ended questions. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using content analysis which classified, summarized and tabulated the data while quantitative data analysis included calculation of frequencies of variables and differences between them in order to support or reject. A model was deemed to be significant if the overall p-value was less than 0.05. Further tests on the contribution of the individual factors were concluded. The influence of a factor was concluded to be significant if the associated p-value was less than 0.05

Likert type scale items were analyzed on whether they were favorable or unfavorable. Those favoring the argument was analyzed using the order that depicted strongly agreed (SA) as having the highest weight and strongly disagreed (SD) having the least weight. For items that did not favor the argument analysis was done in reverse order where strongly disagreed (SD) had the greatest weight and strongly agreed (SA) least weight. Inferential data such as charts and frequency tables were basically applied in the presentation of findings by use of SPSS in all objectives.

## Results and discussion

Peace building becomes strategic when it works over the long run and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally. The objective question was prepared using the four point scale which was analyzed under three main subtopics namely: conflict prevention strategies, Conflict resolution and transformation strategies and Post conflict reconciliation

### Preventing the emergence of conflict

The respondents' were asked whether informal peace committees were able to prevent the emergence of conflict in Nairobi County. Table 2 summarizes the findings

**Table 2 Preventing the emergence of conflict**

<b>Response</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 10%	2	0
1 – 25 %	20	4
26 – 50%	117	23
51 – 70%	162	32
76 - 100%	208	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data (2018)

The findings in Table 2 showed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that informal peace committees were able to prevent the emergence of conflict in Nairobi County. The number agreeing that informal peace committees were able to prevent the emergence of conflict in Nairobi County was 372, representing (73.%), while those with different opinion were 137 representing (27.%). Preventing violence involves more than merely ensuring that crises do not happen in the first place. It also means tackling the root causes of the conflict in question in order to prevent the recurrence of violence. Establishing lasting peace also depends on state building factors, i.e. strengthening state structures in general to improve their capacity to resist conflict. Good governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights play a key role.

An informant from the business community remarked:

Conflict prevention is critical for avoiding the devastation and immense human suffering associated with war. It is also prudent to access the financial and political costs of managing conflict are much higher once violent conflict has already erupted. Informal peace committees have played a key role in the past to contain violence and tame the re-emergence of it.

The remarks emphasized the need for understanding various ways of conflict prevention which can be direct or structural. It emerged that the best way of addressing conflicts is to understand the real causes. It emerged that government in the past has been very cosmetic and casual in conflict management. It emerged that conflict management must start by ensuring historical grievances are addressed before attempting to address current conflicts. The business community argued that it was very expensive to address conflict haphazardly in the long run. They observed that although the local peace committees had tried to prevent violent conflicts they were unable to contain it. Those remarks concurred with (Talentino, 2003), who argued that rather to view successful prevention of conflict as either or, partial and limited success should also be considered. This gives us a more nuanced understanding of what is achieved and is in line with Talentino who argued that it is not constructive to view success in either short or long-term. Instead conflict prevention can only be considered successful when it prevents or ends conflict in the short-term *and* undertakes efforts to alter the underlying causes of violence. As Talentino pointed out, there is a tendency to view the absence of a speedy solution as a failure.

. An informant from the civil society observed that:

Governance systems must ensure that all major groups within a polity perceive themselves as included in decisions and equally able to access resources and public goods. When systems are not inclusive, they contribute to group-based grievances that can lead to mobilization for violence. It is worthwhile to note that informal peace committees have an elaborate structure to ensure inclusivity in their structures of governance.

The observation raised the key question of how inclusive political settlements should be to achieve sustainability exit from conflict. The civil society observed that politics of exclusion was the single biggest cause of conflicts. They argued that political systems that excluded others in power sharing were the biggest cause of conflicts. They cited the case of presidential systems of government which ensured that the winner takes it all. They argued that, care and caution need to be taken to ensure that there is power equity for political stability. The observation corroborated with (Castillejo, 2014), who stated that the notion of inclusiveness features prominently across recent policy recommendations, particularly when it comes to political settlements. He defined a political settlement as ‘a dynamic bargain (primarily between elites) on the distribution of power and resources that is subject to changes and re-adjustments over time’. It is against the backdrop of a growing number of relevant stakeholders within peace building processes be they international, regional, state or non-state actors. The question of how inclusive political settlements should be to achieve sustainability acquires particular relevance. This is especially so in light of ‘increasing evidence that inclusiveness in political settlements is a critical requirement for a sustainable exit from conflict

An informant from the business community observed:

Informal peace committees have embraced participatory governance in their leadership and other structures to support peace. Governance systems should provide pathways for citizens to feel that their issues and identity is represented in the decision making structure in some way. When systems are not seen as participatory in some way, their legitimacy is challenged and collective decisions may not be followed. If participation turns into identity-based factionalization leading some groups to feel excluded, then this can contribute to instability.

The sentiments highlighted the need for participatory leadership which gives the regime legitimacy to govern. It emerged that while citizen participation in decision making in Kenya is a constitutional issue, it has been abused by people in leadership. They cited cases where idlers and hooligans are lured with money to attend decision making meetings and assumed that they are legitimate citizens while they are not. Politicians use this avenue to circumvent justice by ensuring illegitimate people attend meetings and pass resolutions affecting legitimate citizens. They argued that true citizen participation must come from genuine citizens who are directly affected by specific decisions. The sentiments differed with (Castillejo, 2014), who noted that actors vested primarily in international security tend to prioritize horizontal inclusion as a strategic means of preventing conflict recurrence, whereas vertical inclusion falls more in line with the development agenda in light of its democratic underpinnings. While the peace building mandate undoubtedly favors the latter from a normative standpoint, it is important to acknowledge that at times the swiftest means of quelling conflict-fuelling grievances might be through engaging key stakeholders horizontally, despite reduced prospects of sustainability. Castillejo, further said that irrespective of the approach taken, a fundamental requirement is that the political process be locally owned and led, with the OECD emphasizing that the decision of who should participate belongs to the participants (who should own the process) which often equates to the armed groups involved directly in the conflict. It is not a decision that should be imposed by external actors or by the mediator' That is not to say, however, that support offered by external actors should not be informed as much as possible by guiding principles conducive to effective and sustainable peace. One such principle upholds civil society participation as crucial, in light of the growing realization that it represents a 'powerful force that can mobilize either to escalate conflict or facilitate its resolution'

### Recognizing early signs of conflict

The informants opinion was ought on whether the informal peace committees were able to recognize early signs of conflict in Nairobi County.. Table 3 summarizes the findings

**Table 3 Recognizing early signs of conflict**

Response	N	%
Less than 10%	12	2
11– 25 %	61	12
26 – 50%	50	10
51 – 70%	188	37
Over 700%	198	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: field data (2018)

The findings in Table 3 showed that the majority of the respondents strongly felt that informal peace committees were able to recognize early signs of a conflict in Nairobi County. The number who agreed that informal peace committees were able to recognize early signs of conflict in Nairobi County was 386 respondents representing (76%), while those with different opinion were 123 respondents, representing (24%), recognizing early signs of conflict was taken in the context of understanding the context and situation in an escalating conflict or the ability to read warning signs of trouble and indicators of increasing tension or violence, which is the basis for conflict early warning analysis.

An informant from the political class observed that:

There are systematic indicators highlighting underlying, structural, deep-rooted conditions in a society, for example, Latin America throughout the 1970s where there was overwhelming disparity between the minorities rich, who often owned the vast majority of the land, and the poor. The economic disparity is a key source of discontent and conflict. Informal peace committees may not have the capacity on such matters but they can find ways of engaging the national government on such issues by sharing intelligent reports.

The findings from the political class indicated that contrary to an old adage that conflict can only be handled by professionals; informal peace committees had demonstrated that they had the capacity to recognize early signs of conflict. This they argued that it was because of their close proximity with the aggressors who lived in their midst. The argued that the informal peace committees could tell any time there was any form of planning in attacks mostly retaliation in their midst. They also argued that when there is disquiet within the communities, the informal peace committees were in a good position to read the mood on the ground. The observation differed with (Haider, 2014), who argued that professionals were best placed to recognize and handle early warnings of conflict.

Haider observed that they had the best intervention mechanism including intelligence gathering, direct prevention mechanisms, including preventative diplomacy, incentives and sanctions to influence the behavior of key conflict actors and to alter conflict dynamics; and peace-making dialogue to get conflicting parties to talk, to build up trust and to transform relationships. There are also proposals for early intervention through a new form of structured quiet, behind the scenes, mediation by trusted interlocutors, empowered by the international community to prevent conflict. Though not professionals, informal peace committees had the ability to recognize early signs of conflict. This was possible because they are on the ground with the possible aggressors and they are able to get wind of their intentions as they live with them as wives, brothers, sisters or husbands. Responses and interventions can also include structural prevention, which involves long term interventions that aim to transform key socioeconomic, political and institutional factors that if left unaddressed, could lead to violent conflict in the future. They include, but are not limited to: addressing inequality, exclusion and marginalization; developing social capital and social cohesion; promoting livelihoods, local development and economic opportunities; and promoting legitimate and equitable political, justice and security institutions. Early warning and response are less effective if they fail to address the underlying causes of conflict

Another informant from the civil society noted that:

Informal peace committees were able to recognize early signs of conflict in Nairobi County by monitoring certain indicators for example those spreading hate speech and propaganda. There are proximate indicators that can highlight medium-term events and situations and show a certain trend. Citing the case of Rwanda where for two years prior to the genocide in 1994, extremist Hutu groups were using radio to spread propaganda and hate messages against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. I can give further examples of proximate indicators such as the formation of militias, increasing popular discontent, ongoing high inflation, increasing violence against specific ethnic or religious minorities and extremely high unemployment.

The argument raised in this conversation was that when attackers were planning to attack, there were certain key characteristics that were very visible for example, in 2007/2008 post election violence, it was preceded by animosity between certain communities, propaganda against certain communities, hate speech directed towards certain communities, lack of tolerance with certain communities, exaggerated stereotypes among many. It was argued therefore that the informal peace committees were best placed to tell the happenings in their neighborhood and especially reading the mood on the ground. The observation differed with (Haider, 2014), who argued that early signs of conflict required data collection and mapping using data analytics. It is also possible to collect data and do mapping without necessarily using data analytics. The informal peace committees have the ability to detect early signs of conflict using very basic techniques. Conflict prevention requires careful monitoring of indicators of rising tensions and taking measures to ease them. In most community-based violence can be prevented if the right information is delivered to the right stakeholders, at the right time, in the right format, enabling the stakeholders to take the

right actions'. Early warning consists of data collection, risk analysis, and providing information with recommendations to targeted stakeholders, Mobile phones, social media, crowd sourcing, crisis mapping, blogging, and big data analytics are increasingly being used in early warning and early response. Early warning systems should monitor human security indicators that include protection of gender and minority rights, as notable violations can be indicators of rising tensions and emerging conflict. (Arnado, 2012), noted that the biggest challenge for conflict early warning systems is that they have not yet been effectively transformed into a preventive response. While making accurate predictions is challenging, it is much harder to persuade political leaders and the public to act upon warnings. There are problems bringing the information gathered back to the communities who may be able to respond to the threat of violence. Often civil society organizations end up playing the dual role of warning and response, although sometimes they lack the capacity to record and respond effectively. The system is made less effective by a duplication of actions by the wide range of organizations involved in early warning and early response.

An informant from the FGDs observed that:

Although informal peace committees are able to recognize early signs of conflict in Nairobi County, there are immediate catalysts or triggers: events or incidents that are difficult to predict but in combination with systemic and proximate causes, can trigger violence. Pointing the case of Rwanda, where the shooting down of the president's airplane was among the triggers for the genocide in 1994. Other examples include fraud during elections, a sharp rise in the price of basic goods, political arrests, and attacks against peaceful civilian demonstrations.

The observation from this conversation indicated that although there are instances where local peace committees were not able to recognize early signs like triggers, they were able to detect signs that bring violence. The observation pointed to the bigger implications where the root causes of conflict are not addressed and wait for any trigger to activate the conflict. It emerged that conflict resolution must of necessity strive to address root causes and any cosmetic exercise to hoodwink the public can only be termed as an exercise in futility. The remarks differed with (Goodhand Jonathan, 2002), who argued that in all conflict zones, it is extremely difficult to obtain accurate, real-time information. In fact, much of the data utilized in these models is not based on regularly updated field work, but rather on data entry by non-country experts, very far from the conflict zone. Two examples illustrate this point. In Afghanistan, the last census was conducted in 1979, yet this dated information is still used as the baseline by most international and national agencies, even though it is surely unreliable. Since the Somali state collapsed in January 1991, statistics have been impossible to accrue with accuracy given the insecurities on the ground and the lack of regular and reliable data collection, and because up to half of the population is nomadic. Thus, Somalia has not been included in the United Nation Development Programs global Human Development Index since 1997, even though, in recent years, data collection in some sectors has improved. Different organizations in Somali and international gather data in different ways, with no agreed methodology or reliable means for accumulating information over time. When the raw information is inaccurate, the implication for the models is obvious.

### Understanding conflicts structures and dynamics

The respondents opinion was ought on whether informal peace committees had an understanding in conflict structures and dynamics in Nairobi County. Table 4 summarizes the findings.

**Table 1 Understanding conflict structures and dynamics**

<b>Response</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 10%	12	2
11 – 25 %	66	13
26 – 50%	50	10
51 – 70%	183	36
Over 70%	198	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data (2018)

The findings in Table 4 showed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that informal peace committees understood the conflict structures and dynamics in Nairobi County. The number agreeing that informal peace committees understood conflict structures and dynamics in Nairobi County was 391, representing (77%), while those with different opinion were 118 representing (23 %). Local ownership was meant to understand a supportive role. The local context must be the starting point, with every effort being made to identify and understand structures and dynamics at the national and local levels. Local interventions must: (1) Take a supporting role, backing up and building on priorities identified by local actors. The priorities and interests of external actors should, as far as possible, be kept out of the equation when peace- building support is elaborated; where such interests are present they should be transparently identified; (2) recognize that local ownership is more important than efficiency in any peace process. Even if peace processes proceed in a manner that is slower or more cumbersome than international actors might like, it is critical that they do not try to take control or steer the process based on their own timelines or goals

An informant from the religious group observed that:

Informal peace committees are key players in conflict where they employ various mechanisms in conflict prevention through which local ownership is actively promoted and diffused as part of broader peace architectures.

The remarks singled out informal peace committees as key players in the broader peace architecture. Although they do not have official government recognition, they remain as key actors in peace architecture. It emerged that although informal peace committees do not have sophisticated tools and equipment like international players, they still remain attached to the ground. It was observed that informal peace committees use traditional methods in their approach

to conflict prevention. The observation depicted the role of informal peace committees as slower in their peace process than international actors; they are able to take control in their own timelines. The remarks concurred with (Odendaal, 2010,) who described informal peace committees as an optimal architecture for building peace at the local level. These structures have proven to yield valuable results towards achieving sustainable peace and have therefore received significant attention from the mid-1990s onwards. It is important to note that informal peace committees vary widely with respect to the degree to which they rely on informal mechanisms. Indeed, the proven strength of informal peace committees is their ability to reach out and integrate a broad range of relevant local stakeholders within a conflict resolution process, and in turn, to encase this functional microcosm within wider regional and national governance structures.

One informant from the business community remarked:

When it comes to local peace building, informal peace committees are the best. People at the local level understand the grass root better than outsiders. My experience in the sprawling slums of kibera has taught me the best experience in peace building. There are cases of frustration from people who do not understand the dynamics of the slum purporting to lead the peace building process. It is not possible for foreigners to provide a homegrown solution to a local problem. The informal peace committees understand the grass root and are the placed to liaise with the local authorities and other organizations working in the area, mobilizing support from participants from among the local population, and organizing venues and supplies among other things. Members of the informal peace committee know who to contact and when, and the procedures to follow in order to get the best results. For example, when there is an issue that requires urgent attention, they can be able to liaise with authorities and be able to contain the issues arising. It is not possible for foreigners to offer local solution to a local problem and cited many instances that people not familiar with the local issues failed to bring a solution.

The remarks highlighted the importance of informal peace committees in developing local solution to a local problem. It was argued that informal peace committees were uniquely positioned to understand the local dynamics better than outsiders and were able to provide a local solution to a local problem. It emerged that when informal peace committees provided a local solution to a local problem, the resolution was more binding to the people since the people felt part and parcel of the resolution other than a resolution arrived at by outsiders. This observation affirmed the position of the studies by (Lederach, 1997) who demonstrated that what makes peace committees effective is the fact that most if not all are situated in existing networks (involving village heads, local communities, authorities, and other leaders), particularly those created by community members themselves. Any peace committee that utilizes these networks has the potential to build peace at local community levels

Another professional informant observed that:

Informal peace committees are committees or structures formed at the level of a town or village with the aim of encouraging and facilitating joint, inclusive peacemaking and peace building processes within their own context. The informal peace committees find their legitimacy from the local ownership and therefore best suited for peace building at a local level. The committees are however confronted with many challenges; the biggest challenge is that they are very dependent on the broader, political or conflict environment. If that environment becomes very polarized or violent, they are gravely affected.

The observation expressed inadequacy of informal peace committees to contain violent conflicts in their jurisdictions in other instances. Sometimes when things get out of hand, it required other intervention mechanisms international mechanisms for example the use of mediator in the case of post election violence in Kenya 2007-2008). It emerged that the biggest undoing with informal peace committees was the political polarization which was caused by politicians trying to influence the outcome of the election outcome. Politicians were able to evoke emotions against their opponents and thereby whipping ethnic support rather than selling their manifestos to their potential voters. This statement affirmed the position of (Zhao, Jianwen, 1998) who observed that in previous eras the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of sovereign states provided that sovereigns had license to control conflicts within their borders, free from outside influence. Although this norm was often breached by great powers acting in their own national interest within their spheres of influence, it was rarely overturned in favor of universal principles that held all states responsible to common standards. This situation began to change in the later decades of the Cold War, when norms such as human rights, democratic control, and the self-determination of peoples were increasingly invoked against states that abused their citizens

### **Summary of discussions and results of the findings**

The respondents felt that in order to be effective, the mandate of informal peace committees must enable them to address nascent and ongoing conflicts. At the same time, their structure must adequately integrate them within larger peace architectures, and their composition ensures that stakeholders on the local level are participants. Respondents felt that conflict and peace analysis processes should be opened to the participation of local, national and international stakeholders, active in the identified conflict areas. A multi-stakeholder approach to analysis results in a more complete picture of the conflict environment, as root causes, pillars, actors and their relationships and other relevant conflict factors are subjected to a multi-perspective scrutiny

In the strategies, data gathering, mapping and information analysis for the creation of the needed conflict and peace analysis needs to look within the different systems that foster the root causes of conflict in the first place. Systemic approach to analysis entails a whole-of-field perspective, information being drawn as much from the political and economic life, as the social one as well, from across the different tracks of society. In this way, the analysis and intelligence generating process recognizes the conflict as a system of interrelated factors and relationships, creating

through common interaction the conflict environment. The respondents felt that peace building should be linked with the multi-stakeholder character of the process, data gathering, mapping and analysis should be implemented with and through local actors, in order to incorporate the local and national understanding and perception over the conflict similar to the multi-stakeholder character, an analysis that is of participative nature is able to create a more comprehensive picture of the conflict, integrating a wide-range of perceptions on the conflict factors that enable the conflict to move forward, or inhibit it, driving it toward de-escalation and transformation

In the study area, conflicts were addressed by customary institutions that both mediated conflict and provided sanctions. In some cases, this was respected more than the rule of law sanctions. Informal peace committees employed either customary institutions for conflict resolution, and also used rule of law methods and in some cases a combination of customary institutions and the rule of law. In most of the study area, social control was wielded primarily by male elders. However, the additional inclusion of other actors, including females, youth, and marginalized enabled peace committees to have better understanding of the interests of the groups they were speaking for and created community consensus more easily.

It emerged that the informal peace committees helped to enhance the mediation and conflict resolution skills of its members by offering them community mediation training and other personal development training. This kind of training helped them to take every small dispute in a serious way, finding the root causes of conflict and offering them viable alternatives for reconciliation. The ideas learned from the training were applied in mediating numerous local disputes in the County. This proved that the beauty of informal peace committees in Nairobi County was to build relationships and promote harmony at the community level. To the enthusiastic followers supporting informal peace committees, bottom-up approach, seemed an adequate strategy in conflict-affected settings. This was attributed to the inability of the state and its judicial system as well as local and traditional institutions inability or had lost the legitimacy to provide justice and maintain good community relations. Respondents expected that informal peace committees were able to propagate local solutions to pressing justice concerns and insecurity, and promote peaceful co-existence between former enemies at the local level. It emerged that though informal peace committees didn't necessarily comply with national regulation, they had local legitimacy and contributed to human security. Again, they were able to regulate affairs where no local laws existed, or where customary institutions and regulations were perceived as biased, elitist, or involved in conflict politics. It emerged that although informal peace committees' authority and enforcing power was limited, but in settings of continuing distrust in existing institutions they were able to facilitate consensus and had moral weight. The respondents felt that informal peace committees were easy to access, compared to the state machinery and other institutions.

## Conclusion

While the results of this study cannot be generalized, this article has demonstrated that although informal peace committees are imperfect, they are a very important institution in promoting peace and mutual understanding in Nairobi County. There would be no alternatives to replace informal peace committees because only the local actors, who have better knowledge of, and relationships with, the communities can manage the disputes at the grassroots levels. The study demonstrated that informal peace committees have on several times saved lives, broken political deadlocks, solved problems, and restored ordinary within the communities. They have contributed to minimizing violence and building a new upward momentum to heal the former protagonists and promoted reconciliation at the community level. Although fragile in its structure and practices, the informal peace committees in Nairobi County, have offered a relatively cost-effective investment for sustainable peace building at the grass root level.

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