Conflict in Kenya

In recent years, Kenya has experienced a substantial shift in its security landscape, which is profoundly complex, ranging from inter-communal and pastoral violence, political competition (associated with elections, ethnicity and devolution/de-centralization) and a rise in violent extremism, against a backdrop of wider social marginalization, poverty, social inequality, high youth unemployment and resource-based tensions.

This situation is exacerbated by regional instability and spill-over effects from politically unstable countries in the region, Somalia, South Sudan and the Great Lakes Region, resulting in displacement and higher numbers of refugees and internally displaced people within Kenya. The impact and cost of insecurity is enormous and is a major impediment on Kenya’s development agenda of achieving its target set within the Government’s developmental blueprint, the Vision 2030 and the 2030 Global Development Agenda. The impact of violent conflict on women and girls is unique and disproportionate, with women and girls facing specific vulnerability to the commission of systematic sexual and gender-based crimes, restrictions to education, limited livelihood choices, and reduced access to basic services and exclusion in participation of public life. Through the development and implementation of the Kenya National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, Kenya has made significant strides to mainstream gender in peace and security processes as a strategy to ensure that the unique and specific needs of women and girls in conflict and post conflict settings are identified and addressed. Key achievements include the increased leadership and participation of women in both formal and informal peace and security structures and mechanisms. In November 2018 UN Women in partnership with the National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management undertook a gender audit and impact assessment of the national peace architecture. The purpose of this undertaking was to assess the level of women’s engagement in County Peace Committees; the impact of effectively engaging women in peace committees; lessons learned and to document success stories/best practices.

The audit and impact assessment sought to answer the following three questions:

1. What are the numbers of women in the peace committees in Kenya/per county?

- **4,505** members of peace committees countrywide
- 3,205 Men
- 1,300 Women

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<th>Representation in peace committees:</th>
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<td>Male</td>
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2) What are the numbers of women in leadership positions in peace committees?

- **Women currently hold leadership positions**
  - 19 women hold the position of chairperson
  - 42 women hold the position of vice chairperson
  - 78 women hold the position of treasurer
  - 57 women hold the position of secretary

3) What is the impact and value addition of having women in peace committees and in decision making roles?

- The involvement of women in conflict resolution increases the likelihood of utilizing existing legal systems for redress, as women are strong advocates for the use of legal means in the adjudication of disputes.
- The mentorship of youth by women in peace committees has led to the increased leadership and participation of this historically marginalized group.
- Women’s presence in CPC’s provide more effective channels for women in the community to participate in early warning systems and structures, especially in counties where cultural values and attitudes limit the interaction between men and women.
- The ability of women to interact with different stakeholders, at different levels contributes to efforts to maintain peace, and prevent conflict. Women promote inter-communal cohesion due to their ability to identify and promote mutually beneficial collaborations. A key example of an innovative concept implemented by women are “peace merry go rounds”, where women come together to pool resources for savings and investments whilst discussing matters that relate to the maintenance and promotion of peace in their communities.

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**Success Story**

**Merab Shibuyanga**  
DPC Malindi

Merab Shibuyanga is a female member of Malindi County Peace Committee. Merab has been involved in mobilizing the community in Malindi for peace, and has played a key role in the formation of several civil society organizations that advocate for peace. Her dedication towards peace has earned her the nickname of “Mama Amani”. This is her own narration:

After memories of 2001, I stood up as Merab and told myself that I shall not stand by and watch people die, I shall do what it takes to maintain peace. I began to organize peace rallies in Malindi which attracted many people. I brought community leaders together, from all the 43 tribes and formed one unity umbrella by the name of “Malindi Yetu Forum” which I am still the chairperson of... I worked closely with youth, who were feared in the society, to become peace ambassadors. We became a very strong team... and we began the journey for peace. (This is how I was) given the name “Mama Amani”.

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**Success Story**

**Deka Ibrahim: PeaceVirgils to Promote Peace**

In 1993 Deka Ibrahim was deeply affected by the death and destruction that was taking place in her home town of Wajir in Northern Kenya. Seeing that women, the elderly and children were the most vulnerable groups in tribal conflicts, she made the decision to ensure that their voices were heard, and together with fellow women launched a peace campaign at a wedding hall in one of the villages. Deka formed the “Wajir Peace Forum”, which was turning point for the communities’ response to conflict and provided an opportunity for women to unite against violent conflict as part and parcel of the social tapestry of her community. Deka has been credited for providing a home-grown solution to a prolonged crisis that had affected her community for years, with an emphasis on dialogue as a means to broker peace.
Figure 2: Counties with Women Representation meeting the constitutional threshold

Lessons Learned

01 Concerted efforts are required to promote the spirit of volunteerism among women to lead and participate in early warning systems. This must go hand in hand with efforts to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment as the contributions of women are often hampered by restrictive patriarchal structures.

02 Logistical support and incentives play a significant role in the participation of committee members in general and women in particular. For instance, in Wajir respondents attributed poor road networks, vastness of the terrain and long periods of travelling as huge impediments to women’s participation in peace structures especially given their already constrained finances.

03 There is need to build the confidence of women and provide them with the necessary skills to engage in peace processes in order to enhance their participation in peace committees.

04 The symptoms and degrees of sexual harassment in peace committees vary from place to place. Some women cited experiences of being addressed in derogatory terms, and exposure to other forms of sexual harassment which affects their work environment and impeded their participation.

05 The role of youth in peace committees is important and needs to be enhanced and validated.

06 Cross learning platforms should be created among and between the county peace committees to increase sharing of best practices.
Recommendations

Policy

1. The peace structures should be impressed upon to fully embrace inclusion of women and therefore ensure that all the peace committees adhere to the not more than 2/3rd gender parity principle.

2. Women and men bring different issues and perspectives to any process. Therefore, it is important to enhance meaningful participation of women, as opposed to mere presence of women in peace structures.

3. Safeguards and legal protection of women against sexual harassment should be provided. Steps should be made towards enhancing the protection of women at DPCs through:
   - The development of a sexual harassment policy for the peace structures
   - Compulsory training of sexual harassment for all members of peace committees
   - Punitive consequences should be enforced for any proven cases of sexual harassment.

Programme

4. To enable achievement of sustainable change in the area of violence and conflict, concerted efforts should be made towards implementation of UNSC RES 1325 and related KNAP.

5. Development partners and donors should make funding conditional to gender-responsive peace structures.

6. The internal governance systems of CPCs need to be supported to have efficient flow of information and effective communication.

7. Confidentiality should be maintained to protect women from victimization, and enhance their participation in early conflict warning and reporting.

Capacity

9. All stakeholders should make efforts to enhance gender capacity through training on gender mainstreaming in peace processes for all members of key bodies.

10. Younger women should be empowered through mentorship opportunities so that they can play a more central role in peace committees and peace work in general.

11. Women’s leadership opportunities should be supported by identifying and developing locally led women’s networks, including women’s peace networks, community conflict resolution mechanisms and civil society initiatives.