FAITH BASED GROUPS ROLE IN CONFLICT SOLUTION IN NAIROBI SLUMS

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Abstract

Purpose: The general objective of the study was to determine faith based group's role in conflict solution in Nairobi slums.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop descriptive research design.

Results: Based on the findings the study concluded that form and causes of conflicts that faith based groups in Nairobi slums faced; social and economic effect of role faith based group's role in conflict solution and major challenges encountered by faith based groups had a significant effect on conflict resolution in Nairobi slums. Study recommended that future studies can explore the role of individual roles in conflict solution in Nairobi slums.

Policy Recommendation: This study provides implications for both policy and practice. Based on the study findings the study recommends that the government and FBOS should increase cooperation's in their quest to foster peace in the society.

Keywords: *Faith Based Groups, Nairobi slums, conflict solution*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR, 2000) documented that in Kenya alone since independence in 1963, over six thousand people had died due to electoral violence, ethnic clashes and political assassinations. About nine hundred thousand people were displaced between 1991 and March 2008 (Macharia, 2008b). Conflicts affect people in both rural and urban settings. However, the poor bear the brunt of violence more than their affluent counterparts. This is occasioned by the socio-cultural and political challenges that already exist in the informal settlements (Pierli and Abeledo 2002; Maupeu, Katumanga and Mitullah 2005:69).

Despite numerous efforts in peace-building, human existence has been characterized by conflicts triggered by diverse causes and manifested in various forms. The cost and effects of conflicts have been unbearably high. Globally, the United Nations (UN) spends a considerable amount of its annual budget in peace-keeping missions, peace-building and conflict transformation processes (Opongo, 2006a: 162). In Africa, Oxfam International, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and Safe World Reports indicate that from 1995-2005, armed conflicts cost Africa over 300 billion United States (US) dollars (Abdul 1987:61; UN World Plan of Action 1999:13).

A third of the global urban population – or one billion people – today reside in slums. This number is projected to double to 2 billion by 2030 unless drastic measures are taken. In developing countries, where 95 percent of the future global urban growth is projected to take place, the situation is exacerbated, with some countries such as such as Sudan, Central African Republic and Chad having over 90% of their total urban population residing in slums (UN-Habitat 2008). These processes often outdo the capacity to govern and steer, and with pressure increasing, conflict potential is high (Kraas & Sterly 2009).

Nairobi, the capital of Kenya and the largest city in Eastern Africa, has a population of 4million people, over 60% of which reside in slums of high density, are poor and engage mainly in informal economic activities. With slums growing at the same rate as the city at 5% per year, and the majority of its current and projected future population falling out of the existing formal frameworks, urban governance issues are paramount (Hendriks 2010). Stakeholder relations have been unhealthy, characterized by conflict, antagonism, resistance and violence (Kedogo 2009). Indeed these unhealthy relations have been blamed for greatly contributing to the deteriorating urban situation and failure of many initiatives to improve the situation (Syagga et al. 2001, Mittulah 2003, Omenya & Huchzermeyer 2006).

The involvement of fath-based actors in conflict resolution is not a new trend and in the past, faith-based actors, clergy, religious movements and organizations have played a part in resolving conflicts (Bercovitch and Orellana 2009, 176). Johnston (2005, 210) says that because many of today's conflicts overrun the grasp of traditional diplomacy, religious actors all over the globe are getting involved in peacemaking. In offering an explanation of this state of affairs, he argues that religious reconciliation matched with official or unofficial diplomacy is seen by many to offer alternatives for dealing with identity based conflicts to the real political approaches characteristic of the Cold War era. While appreciating that past efforts to resolving some of these crises have been in the form of diplomatic efforts by government and inter-governmental bodies, the role of religious leaders and spiritual leaders

in conflict management and resolution has been neglected in the study of international relations (Johnston 1994, 4).

There is generally no accepted definition of a faith-based organization (FBO) as used by government, academia or the faith-based sector. The ambiguity of the term is due in part to the wide variety of organizations that call themselves "faith-based" organizations and the fact that these organizations vary widely in size, mission, services provided, degree of religiosity and ties to religious institutions. An FBO can be characterized as an organization, with or without non-profit status, which provides social services and is either religiously motivated or religiously affiliated. Under this definition, at least four different types of faith based organizations can be identified: a) Religious congregations; b) Organizations or projects sponsored by congregations; c) Incorporated non-profit organizations that are independent or affiliated with a congregation; and) Local and regional interfaith coalitions (Goldsmith, Eimicke, and Pineda 2006, 2-3).

Faith-based organizations in general schedule regular meetings of their representative members, specify their decision making procedures, have a permanent staff, and organize themselves through rational organizational models (Jacobson 1984; Wuthnow 2004 quoted in Santiago 2009, 94). Their membership tends to consist of individuals or private associations (Stephenson 2005 quoted in Santiago 2009, 94). According to Willets (2006) quoted in Santiago (2009, 94), one of the best respected principles that guide non-governmental organizations including faith-based ones is their commitment to nonviolence

Individuals and faith communities have provided assistance to those afflicted by natural disasters, persecution, displacement and war long before international humanitarian law was formalized in treaty law. The theme of justice for the poor, the marginalized, the alien is central to the Hebrew Scriptures. The afflicted often sought help in temples and cities of refuge, and in later medieval period, monasteries became places of refuge and hospitality for strangers. Catholic orders were set up to provide charity to the poor, medical care to the sick, education for children and hospitality to strangers. In the Orthodox and Protestant traditions, a lay ministry, the deaconate, was set up to carry out Christian service. This service for others was premised not only on Christian values of charity and mercy but on the belief in the absolute value of the human person (Ferris 2005, 313).

1.2: Problem Statement

Despite numerous efforts in peace-building, human existence has been characterized by conflicts triggered by diverse causes and manifested in various forms. The cost and effects of conflicts have been unbearably high. Globally, the United Nations (UN) spends a considerable amount of its annual budget in peace-keeping missions, peace-building and conflict transformation processes (Opongo, 2006a: 162). In Africa, Oxfam International, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and Safe World Reports indicate that from 1995-2005, armed conflicts cost Africa over 300 billion United States (US) dollars (Abdul 1987:61; UN World Plan of Action 1999:13).

Hann (2005) and Nabushawo (2004) describe causes of conflicts as complex. Some of the conflicts are culturally motivated. As such, differences and incompatibilities among populations of diverse backgrounds are manifested through violence. The authors also argue that other conflicts emanate from collective forms of people"s sentiments and values deeply entrenched in their cultural diversity, experiences and beliefs. Every community has a distinct way of livelihood often perceived as superior to others. Hann (2005) and Nabushawo (2004)

further point out that throughout history, culture, social orientations, political persuasion and religious beliefs determine the people‟s relations in any community worldwide. Such is the reality in Kenya where peoples‟ diverse backgrounds influence their perception of others. This has further hindered the full realization of national unity, peace and tranquility. In 2003, for instance, the North Eastern part of Nairobi was hit by the infamous conflicts between *Mungiki*, a militia group linked to Agikuyu and *Taliban*, militia groups associated with the Luo ethnic group. This was in a bid to illegally control supply of very scarce infrastructural services such as water, electricity and security by each of these militia groups. The services were lacking or were inadequate in the area.

In times of conflict, the poor are more vulnerable than any other category and impacts more enormous due to already derailed developments (Burnett Manji and Karmali 2007:103). During conflicts the population is denied access to basic needs such as health, education, family cohesion, security, food and privacy. People are forced to live in camps as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or refugees. The cost of conflicts among the poor in terms of human and property loss, and the damage done to social infrastructure are mostly underestimated (Wanyande, 1997). The poor are always at risk of falling into cycles of conflict in which ineffective structures and agencies fail to mitigate (Gurr & Khosla 2001:13). The study seeks to further research on the role faith based groups role in conflict solution in Nairobi slums.

1.3 Specific Objective

To determine form and causes of conflicts that faith based groups in Nairobi slums face

To determine the social and economic effect of role faith based groups' role in conflict solution in Nairobi slums

To establish the major challenges encountered by faith based groups in their endeavor to solve conflicts in Nairobi slums
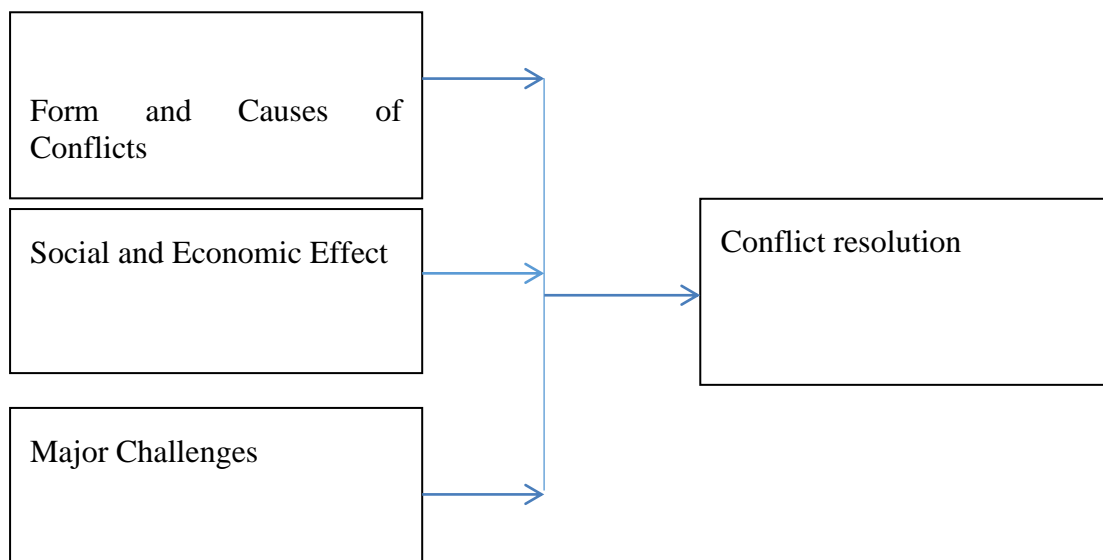
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical review

2.1.1 Conflict Theory

The psychologist Robert Hinde writes that (1997) "Certain behavioral propensities, including the capacity for aggression, are common to virtually all humans. This does not mean that they are genetically determined …humans have a capacity to be both aggressive and altruistic…the behavior shown depends on a host of developmental, experiential, social and circumstantial factors." Although socio biologists assume that genes exist for specific behavioral dispositions, like "self-sacrificial bravery in warfare" (Tiger and Fox 1971), no such genes have been identified, and behavior in warfare and group conflict situations has been explained in other terms. For example, Jews in Nazi Europe put up little resistance to the Holocaust. Were they genetically lacking in self-sacrificial bravery in warfare? The Jews who emigrated to Palestine belonged to the same gene pool, yet fought aggressively and successfully for the creation and defense of the state of Israel in 1946–1948 and in subsequent wars. Helen Fein (1979) has explained the lack of resistance during the Holocaust with a gradual entrapment model of the Jews by the Nazis.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variables**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.3: Literature Review

Kimani (2007) and Mutegi (2008) demonstrate the successful initiatives of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in social-transformation and especially conflict management. They cite Sudan as a beneficiary of such initiatives through The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC). This council dealt with issues of peace building, conflict resolution, reconciliation, healing and repatriation of citizens back to Southern Sudan. The presence of Christianity in MIS is evident through existence of numerous churches. Various churches have established socio-economic projects, focusing on education, health and housing, among others. The Catholic Church, for example in 1999, initiated a low cost housing project in Mathare Area 4A. Ironically, the initiative met a lot of resistance from the locals, resulting in violence. The residents were afraid of displacement and increased rental fee resulting from its upgrading. The project sought to replace temporary structures with permanent modern houses (Mwicigi, 2005).

Ndung'u (2003), Bodewes (2005) and Yaye (2008) postulate that historical injustices, from the scramble for Africa to the present day, corruption and excessive abuse of human rights remain key threats to the realization of equitable and cohesive nationhood. They argue that these ills trigger or rekindle conflicts. Since the colonial period in Kenya, land issues have remained emotive, contentious and an obstacle to social cohesion and economic growth (Syagga, 2012:1). Indeed, the development blueprint, Kenya Vision 2030 (GOK, 2008) notes that after independence, the country operated for a long time without a national land policy. This has led to weak land administration and management frameworks. Natural resources are shared only by a few hence disintegration and suspicion between the rich and the poor. These studies are important because they highlight some historical aspects that underlie the growth of informal settlements and subsequent violence among the urban poor.

Rutto (2000), Chepkwony (2002), Gecaga (2002a), Mwicigi (2005), Opongo (2006a), Keener (2006), Tarimo and Manwelo (2007) and Ekeno (2008) share similar are convinced that ethnocentrism stirs conflict in the contemporary world. As a basic attitude, ethnocentricism promotes the belief that one‟s own ethnic group or culture is superior to other ethnic groups, and that one‟s cultural standards can be applied universally (Hooghe, 2008). This causes strife among people, leading to 14 discrimination, genocide and prejudice. From these studies, it is important to see how the Church offers both a chance and a demand for ethnic harmony. Maupeu et al (2005) and Murunga (2007) have carefully observed that since Kenya‟s independence, there have been ethnocentric militia and political movements. Such include *Mungiki* aligned to Agikuyu, *Taliban* to Luo and *Sugusugu* to the Abagusii. There were also ethnic based groups such as Gikuyu-Embu-Meru Association (GEMA) and Kalenjin-Maasai-Turkana-Samburu Association (KAMATUSA). These studies identify ethno-segregation as a cause of conflict. The study provides relevant insights on how the society can overcome such challenges and in particular in the MIS where violence is rampant. Miller (2001), Gecaga (2002a) and Greenfield (2000) blame poverty for societal instability. They argue that where poverty abounds, there is illiteracy, poor health, insecurity, unemployment and conflict over scarce national resources. As a result, disgruntled community members rise against one another. Further, Greenfield (2000), Mayambi (2008) and Seth (2009) concede that poverty is a major sociological barrier to mutual relationship. They note that many poor people feel inferior and intimidated by affluent people hence there is an imbalance in their social life. Conflicts arise when such imbalances are not addressed. It is therefore possible to associate poverty with violence at different societal levels. The gap between the rich and poor strains societal relations thereby leading to violence. This stems from feelings of injustice and denied basic social amenities. This study contextualizes conflict among the poor.

A number of challenges have been put forward in the context of religious peacebuilding. One is that in some instances the religious leaders may lack the capacity of peacebuilding theory and practice and therefore may be ineffective. Secondly, some groups or individuals may have reservations about working with actors of a different religion or those opposed to the intersection of religion and peacebuilding. Thirdly, religious peace actors may be perceived to be proselytizing, by actively seeking to attract religious membership or conversion (Dubois 2008).

Faith-based organizations and individuals have increasingly taken a proactive role in various facets of peacebuilding on the African continent and beyond. FBOs and individuals are concerned with reconciling warring parties and engaging in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts (Bouta, Abu Nimer, and Kadayifci-Orellana 2005). Numerous examples suffice to demonstrate this important role. The Quakers were involved in mediation efforts in Nigeria in the 1967-70 Biafran war; the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Sudan in mediation efforts between the south and the north that culminated in the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace agreements. In Mozambique in 1990 the community of *Sant' Egidio* was instrumental in mediation efforts that put to an end the Mozambican Civil War (Johnston 2005; Bouta, Abu Nimer, and Kadayifci-Orellana 2005).

In South Africa, religion and most notably Christianity contributed a significant role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). TRC was the outcome of a political negotiation between Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress (ANC) and Frederic William de Klerk's National Party which ended over 40 years of apartheid. In 1995

2.4 Summary of Research Gaps

2.4.1 Conceptual Gap

Abu-Nimer (2001, 2) posits that since the end of the Cold War, many scholars have argued that most conflicts are driven from "clashes of communal identity based on race, ethnicity, or religious affiliations." Abu- Nimer consequently argues that religion therefore has an effect on the conflict causes, dynamics and resolution. He further notes that religious values and norms are critical aspects of the cultural identity of many people involved in conflict dynamics. Consequently he posits that religion can bring social, moral and spiritual resources to the peacebuilding process. Bercovitch and Orellana (2009, 177), while acknowledging that in the last decade conflict resolution scholars have produced serious literature on the interplay between religion, conflict and peacemaking, point out that a systematic and comprehensive assessment of the conditions under which faith-based and religious actors are more effective in resolving conflicts is yet to be undertaken.

2.4.2 Methodological Gap

Kariuki (2006) study was guided by the biblical paradigm of peace and tranquility that underscores harmony in any given community. Data for the study was drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Field research was carried out in MIS by use of self-administered questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGDs) and oral interviews (OIs). In this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling and snow ball methods to select respondents. The researcher targeted a sample size of 128. Qualitative method of data analysis was used; data was synthesized thematically according to the study objectives and envisaged chapters. The current study used desktop study research design. Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design thus presenting a methodological gap. The current study used desktop study research design.

2.4.3 Scope Gap

Kimani (2007) and Mutegi (2008) demonstrate the successful initiatives of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in social-transformation and especially conflict management. The current study was conducted in all the wards of the larger Nairobi province which are 85in Nairobi's 17 constituencies.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The current study used desktop study research design.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the past literature the study concluded that there existed different form and causes of conflicts that faith based groups in Nairobi slums faced. Historical injustices, from the scramble for Africa to the present day, corruption and excessive abuse of human rights remained key threats to the realization of equitable and cohesive nationhood.

Based on the past literature the study concluded that there were perceived social and economic effect of role faith based groups role in conflict solution in Nairobi slums. These included reconciling warring parties and engaging in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts.

Also major challenges have been encountered by faith based groups her endeavor to conflict solution in Nairobi slums. A number of challenges have been put forward in the context of religious peacebuilding. One is that in some instances the religious leaders may lack the capacity of peacebuilding theory and practice and therefore may be ineffective. Secondly, some groups or individuals may have reservations about working with actors of a different religion or those opposed to the intersection of religion and peacebuilding. Thirdly, religious peace actors may be perceived to be proselytizing, by actively seeking to attract religious membership or conversion

4.2 Recommendations

This study provides implications for both policy and practice. Based on the study findings the study recommends that the government and FBOS should increase cooperation's in their quest to foster peace in the society.

4.3 Area for Future Studies

The general objective of the study was to determine faith based group's role in conflict solution in Nairobi slums. The specific objectives included: determine form and causes of conflicts that faith based groups in Nairobi slums face; to determine the social and economic effect of role faith based group's role in conflict solution in Nairobi slums and finally ascertain major challenges encountered by faith based groups in their endeavor to conflict solution in Nairobi slums. Thus future studies can explore the role of individual roles in conflict solution in Nairobi slums

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