

## **The Perspective of Youth in Peace Building, Healing and Reconciliation in Eldoret-Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper attempts to point out the perspective of the youth in the realization of a peaceful Kenya through peace building, healing and reconciliation process. The study was conducted within Eldoret where a total of two hundred youths were randomly sampled and were required to fill in questionnaires regarding the realization of a peaceful Kenya. Data collected for the study was analyzed by categorizing, discussing and tabulating what the youth considered as the right procedure and process of peace building, healing and reconciliation. This study proposes that the views and opinions of youth must be factored in any decision making process concerning peace, healing and reconciliation. It is anticipated that the outcome of the study will boost the government, religious and other non-governmental organizations efforts of achieving a peaceful Kenya. The investigation also provides an insight into ways of empowering the youth in seeking peace, healing and reconciliation in Kenya.*

**Key words:** Peace, healing, reconciliation, youth empowerment, Kenya.

### **1.0 Introduction**

Prior to the Post Election Violence of 2007/2008 Kenya was generally regarded as a fountain of peace both regionally and globally. During and after the 2007 presidential election, the position however changed tremendously. This is the period during which the country drifted into a near state of civil war occasioned by the hotly contested presidential election. The youth were largely perceived to have actively participated in the violent activities (Waki, 2008). Generally youth are considered the pillars of any society. However over time the Kenyan youths' view on various issues has not been considered despite their ever increasing numbers and influence in the society. The society generally perceives the old as having usurped the participation of the youth in many matters of national and international concern. Given this situation the youth need to be fully involved in the societal issues. The ever elusive peace in a society such as Kenya can be attributed to this aspect. The aim of the study was to find out the perspective, participation and understanding of youth on the concepts peace-building, healing and reconciliation.

The paper therefore is an investigation into the perspective of youth in relation to peace building, healing and reconciliation in Kenya. This has been a missing component in the handling of national matters, yet the young people's potential cannot be underestimated. Over time now the population of youth in Kenya has outgrown that of the elderly who seem to be competing with the young in nation building; social, political, religious and socio-economic aspects (MOYAS<sup>1</sup>-Kenya)

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry Of Youth Affairs and Sports

Social, political and economic challenges have posed a threat to the social fabric and the potential of the youth in national development. According to MOYAS-Kenya, the youth form 60% of the total labour force but majority are unemployed due to the country's high unemployment level. The elderly have taken the advantage of their social, economic and political power to exploit the young people who are highly educated, unemployed and energetic. This kind of exploitation was witnessed during the post-election violence of 2007/2008 where the youth unfortunately participated greatly.

In view of this there is need to actively involve the youth in matters pertaining to peace, healing and reconciliation which has not been fully realized to date. Attempts have been made to involve the youth in economic, social and religious activities in a bid to tap their potential. This has seen the establishment of the *Youth and Sports Ministry*. In peace building and reconciliation, little has been initiated and achieved. This can be attributed to the missing involvement of the youth which has not been fully harnessed. This paper attempts to get the youth perspective on issues concerning peace, healing and reconciliation in an effort to fully tap their potential.

The study was carried out among youth aged 18-35 based in Eldoret, given that it was one of the most affected areas by the 2007/2008 PEV. Data for the study was collected through structured questionnaires administered randomly to a sample of 200 youth within Eldoret. Out of 200 possible respondents, 127 youths filled and returned the questionnaires; where 46.5% were male and 53.5% female. The data was analyzed based on the objectives of the study. This was done by categorizing and discussing what the youth consider as the right procedure and process of peace building, healing and reconciliation.

### **1.1 Youth**

Youth is defined as the time of life when a person is young especially the time before a child becomes an adult. It is also used to mean the quality or state of being young (Hornby, 2007). MacMillan English Dictionary (2007), adds that youth refers to the time in someone's life when they are young or looking young. Generally, the term youth refers to a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood. For the purposes of this study, the term youth refers to a person aged between 18 to 35.

On the other hand, MOYAS & UNDP (2009) defines the youth as persons resident in Kenya in the age bracket 15 to 30 years. This takes into account the physical, psychological, cultural, social, biological and political definitions of the term. Currently, the youth in Kenya, number about 9.1 million, and account for 32% of the population. Of these, 51.7 % are female. The youth form 60% of the total labour force but majority are unemployed due to the country's high unemployment level.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA) was established on the 7th of December, 2005 to address youth concerns in the country. Its establishment was grounded on the realization that the Government may not achieve meaningful development without adequately dealing with the many socio-economic challenges facing the Kenyan youth. In May, 2008 the Department of Sports in the then Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services was transferred to the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs forming Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MOYAS). The Vision of MOYAS is to nurture a responsible and empowered youth, building a better Kenya, whereas its mission is to maximize the full potential of the youth through participatory engagements that serve their needs and aspirations in building a better Kenya (MOYAS 2009).

According to MOYAS & UNDP (2009), it is estimated that 75% of the Kenyan population is below 30 years of age. In 2007, those between 18 and 35 years of age, the target group in this study, were 11 million out of 14 million registered voters. They were able to influence the political landscape in the December 2007 general elections. Considered the main perpetrators of the post election violence, the youth destroyed an estimated Ksh.100 billion of the economy. They also constitute the majority of the work force, are hard working and educated. It is projected that by 2012 there will be 16 million young people aged between 18 and 35, thus the government should plan to turn this wonderful resource into a powerhouse.

According to the Government of Kenya Vision 2030 (2007:6), it is noted that:

No society can gain social cohesion if significant sections of the population live in abject poverty. To that extent, Kenya Vision 2030 includes equity as a recurrent principle in economic, social and political programs. Special attention has been given to investment in arid and semi arid (ASAL) districts, communities with high incidence of poverty, unemployed youth, women and all vulnerable groups.

It is worth noting that among the goals for 2012 in the vision 2030, the Kenyan government aims at increasing the opportunities for youth. Some of the flagship projects for youth include; rehabilitating or/and building youth empowerment centres in each constituency, establishing a sports' lottery fund and an international academy of sports, increasing the youth enterprise fund and ensuring efficient and productive use of funds allocated to identified youth groups.

The already complex and challenging situations experienced by the Kenyan youth today can be attributed to the 2007/2008 Post Election Violence (PEV). The political and social turmoil of the 1990s, and in particular the 2007/2008 PEV left scars that are being borne disproportionately by young people. It is estimated that 56% of Kenya's population live in poverty. This economic environment inevitably has a destructive impact on the social fabric of the country ((MOYAS & UNDP 2009). Despite this gloomy picture however, developments in more recent years have given grounds for optimism. One such development has been the creation of a Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports which coordinates the participation of youth in national affairs.

### **1.2 The Waki Report on the role of youth in 2007/8 PEV**

Although Kenya's population growth rate has been reduced and is now reportedly down to 3%, it still has an estimated two million youth who are unemployed. Furthermore, between 1992 and 1996, the number of street children increased 300% in just four years. Many of these initially rootless children who are now adults are the product of displacement by ethnic violence. They have grown up on the streets and are inured to violence, something that is clearly very dangerous. In addition, although many youth speak English, something that has raised their expectations, they have no hope of formal sector employment. The combination of being rootless, having survived amidst violence, plus their need for an identity and a livelihood makes them ready recruits for violent gangs, which exist all over Kenya and are tapped by politicians, particularly but not exclusively during elections. The gangs are devoid of ideology and operate on a willing buyer willing seller basis. Given the hierarchical nature of gangs and the upwardly mobile hopes of their members to become as well off as their leaders, youth can be mobilized for a variety of reasons, not just to meet their daily needs. This, in itself is a very dangerous situation, helping to explain why since the 1990s violent gangs have proliferated all over Kenya.

Additionally, there is also a growing problem of unemployment among youth who are university educated, estimated to be around 40,000 a year, given that only 150,000 formal sector jobs have been created since 2003, raising the spectre of whether these individuals will also be ready to engage in violence as well if they are unable to find work.

Violent gangs, consisting mainly of unemployed youth have been mobilized into gangs along ethnic lines. Their power, to the point of having become shadow governments in many areas, stems from two sources. First as the main aim of Government in the 1990s was to mobilize political support to gain and maintain political power, a good deal of revenue was spent on patronage rather than on maintaining infrastructure and providing social services. This meant that the country started to crumble, visually evident in the decay of roads and the proliferation of uncollected garbage, even in the capital city of Nairobi, which once had been called the "city in the sun". This crumbling as well as a decline in social services and security also paved the way for violent gangs which provided them. This gave unemployed youth work, albeit within gangs, and made the latter extremely powerful. Over time these gangs operated as Mafioso shakedown gangs, with violence and impunity, as they continue to do. Increasingly, citizens began to ask who was in charge of Kenya, gangs or the Government.

While one might have expected that the police could have dealt with the increase in violent gangs operating as virtual shadow states in so many parts of the country, the Government has been ineffective in dealing with them for several reasons. First, many politicians themselves have used these violent gangs to decimate their opponents, to protect themselves from a dictatorial state in the 1990s, and to gain power then and now. This has itself given gangs such as *Mungiki*, the *Taliban*, *Chinkororo* and others a life and the ability to operate without fear of being caught. Second, by the time government was serious about banning the groups, they were large, controlled a number of areas, and continued to operate in spite of the bans. Third, security forces including police often were victims of these gangs themselves and used draconian but ineffective force against them. Furthermore, the fact that both the police and military are perceived historically to have been recruited along ethnic lines to protect the particular government of the day has increased the likelihood of their breaking down along ethnic lines in a crisis and being either unable or unwilling to maintain law and order impartially.

This meant that post election violence proliferated and intensified for a number of months and that politicians and businessmen allegedly chose to hire gangs of youth to fight their attackers rather than call in forces whose loyalties could not necessarily be counted on.

The post election period infused gangs of unemployed youth with more power than before and has given them an added currency. While clearly there is a problem of youth who grow up in slums and make their living by joining gangs because of a lack of good alternatives and the prospects of upward mobility, the issue is not one of poverty alone. Instead this situation intersects with other phenomena, including that of weak institutions, ethnic polarization, and the willingness of the political class to hire gangs to engage in violence to obtain political power. Furthermore, the power of these gangs should not be underrated, including their ability to force other poor unwilling youth to join them as they remain unchecked, grow, and along with other forces threaten the integrity of state and nation. In this sense, youth are both being exploited and have become exploiters themselves.

## ***2.0 Youth Perspective on Peace, Healing and Reconciliation***

### **2.1 Peace**

Generally, peace can be defined as the absence of war, hostilities, quarrels and disagreements. Mungai (2007:16) argues that peace is not merely the absence of war but an existence of harmony and tranquillity between humans and their environment. Sande (1997: 39) says that peace is usually referred to as unity and does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict and strife. Unity on the other hand is the presence of genuine harmony, understanding, and goodwill. Gumbleton (1980: 215) adds that:

Peace doesn't usually just happen, its' seeds are planted in the centre of our being. We have to let it grow and develop there; we have to allow it to be born within us. We have to look upon it as something precious beyond measure, something we are willing to nurture along by love and constant attention... It is as tragic as it is ironic that the whole world today wants peace, yet there is hardly a spot on earth that is not a witness to brutality and turmoil. Part of the problem is that everyone wants peace on his or her own terms; which usually prove to be self centered and narrow. But justice and harmony do not grow and thrive without care and responsiveness on our part.

Going by Gumbleton's argument, we can deduce that the whole world is on fire. This means that the existence of peace is an elusive fact thus the need to develop and suggest measures of curbing this menace. In this case the youth have a bigger role in peace building initiatives.

Kamoet (2008: 12) observes that peace is viewed as absence of violence, that is, a situation where there is no physical harm to people and property which manifests itself in terms of wars, riots, murders and vandalism among other anti-social behaviour in the society. He also argues that maintenance of law and order, pursuit of stability and relatively safe socio-political order are the primary objectives of peace in any given society. It is imperative therefore that we understand how the youth perceive peace and the lack of same. From our study we found out that the Kenyan youth had diverse views on the understanding of peace. Their perspectives of peace were summed up as follows. That peace is:

- a. Where there is harmony, good relationship, togetherness, brotherhood, co- existence, cohesion, unity and discipline, absence of hostility and lack of disturbance.
- b. The state of calmness for example where there is no war or conflict.
- c. Emotional, psychological and environmental stability.
- d. Where people understand each other, are open and listen to each others' views.
- e. Where there is no disparity in opinion.
- f. Freedom to live and move anywhere in the country without fear and feeling threatened.
- g. Where people have peace of mind.
- h. The state of lack of worry, despite disparity in ethnic groups and social classes.

Going by their opinion it is clear that the youth perceive peace in a pragmatic manner. A good example is an instance where one of the respondents said that peace is emotional, psychological and environmental stability. This is contrary to our Kenyan politicians who perceive peace in terms of absence of skirmishes witnessed during the 2007/2008 PEV. When politicians differ openly in opinion for example, the youth perceive this to be the lack of peace.

## **2.2 Healing**

Healing is generally understood as recovery; that is a state of restoring normalcy after an occurrence of damage. Kenya as a country witnessed a tragic and damaging moment during the 2007/2008 PEV, which destabilized the peaceful atmosphere enjoyed until then. This requires a total healing which should be preceded by a process of forgiveness. Forgiveness can simply be defined as a change of heart and accepting one another despite having been wronged.

Enright et al (1998) argue that any comprehensive definition of forgiveness must contain two essential elements: Primarily, the willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, condemnation and subtle revenge towards an offender who acts unjustly. Secondly, the fostering of the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and love towards an offender.

They further argue that forgiveness consists of a decrease in negative responses and an increase in positive responses towards a transgressor. Forgiveness involves a complex process of healing and reconciliation which requires a certain logical sequence beginning with an act of remembering, acknowledging, confession, forbearing of victims from desire for revenge upon offenders and restoration. Taking this perspective into consideration, the Kenya's Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) under the so called Agenda IV could not have come at a better time than now when the nation is gearing towards peace, healing and reconciliation more than ever before.

According to Wabunhu (2007) there exist three perspectives of forgiveness. The first one being personal forgiveness which is normally construed as a unilateral response by the forgiver or victim without solicitation from or the participation of the offender. However repentance and confession by the offender are only of great help to the one (victim) who wants to forgive.

Secondly, interpersonal perspective which unlike personal forgiveness involves a bi-lateral response (the inner disposition and active participation) of the offender is required. The offender must realize his/her wrong doing, and be remorseful. That is a reconciliatory, humble and apologetic attitude of the offender. In this perspective, the aim is the eventual restoration of lost harmony, peace, justice and broken relationship. It therefore requires a sustained mutual response and delicate interplay when the transgressor seeks forgiveness from the victim who grants forgiveness.

Finally, the socio-political perspective of forgiveness is more of reconciliation than forgiveness. This entails a long term drawn-out process of healing of wounds and breaches, redressing imbalances, and restoring broken relationships among the people. It is perceived as an ongoing process with ups and downs. The socio-political perspective hence cannot be accomplished overnight in the sense that it concerns everyone affected by the crime. According to this perspective, reconciliation becomes a national or societal project. This is where those involved strive earnestly to make a personal contribution towards establishing a culture of respect for human dignity, rights and enhancing zero tolerance for impunity.

The Kenyan youth under study had equally diverse views on the understanding of the concept of healing, and by extension forgiveness. Their perspectives include the following.

- a. Forgetting the past and focusing on the future.
- b. Uniting warring people.
- c. Restoring peace and completely overcoming negative feeling, and bad experiences.
- d. Recovering from trauma and malicious acts.
- e. Compensating losses and working towards re-bonding.
- f. Reinstating previous state of mind by mending damages.
- g. Overcoming state of instability by coming up with common solutions.
- h. Willing and accepting to forgive each other.
- i. Restoring peace, love and unity.
- j. Achieving normalcy.
- k. Coming to terms with the reality of post-election violence.

From this study, forgiveness which is a prerequisite for healing is a very crucial step towards achieving peace, healing and reconciliation in Kenya.

This was vividly demonstrated by the contributions made by the youth under study. Kenyans therefore need to take seriously the process of forgiveness in order to achieve total healing as clearly demonstrated by the youth perspective discussed in this paper.

### **2.3 Reconciliation**

Generally, reconciliation can be perceived as re-bonding after misunderstanding. Locheng (2009) defines reconciliation as the cement that binds together and which is a source of unity. Similarly it is, love that builds togetherness in the family, the community, and the nation.

Wabunhu (2007:74) further argues that:

Reconciliation and forgiveness are complex issues that remain the basic concepts in Christian faith. Reconciliation is the by-product of forgiveness. It represents the possibility of an interior conversion in an individual. True reconciliation results from a genuine and true forgiveness that is the outcome of a victims' willingness and readiness to abandon his/her rights to revenge and look forward to repairing the broken or damaged relationships (vertical<sup>2</sup> and horizontal<sup>3</sup>) and ultimately restoring peace and justice. There can be no forgiveness, reconciliation and thus no peace without the right and desire to revenge. Reconciliation requires the victim and offender to break free of the self-deception (the basis of evil). Reconciliation does not cost. It requires a moment of deep silence, remembering and forbearing from revenge.

He further points out that ultimate forgiveness for lasting reconciliation, sustaining justice and peace involves three aspects: process of reform, moment of remembering, abandoning the right, the desire and the intention to revenge notwithstanding the grace of God. Based on Wabunhu's claim, we can argue out that reconciliation is the end result to achieving peace after a disagreement like the 2007/2008 PEV in Kenya.

According to Hessel (1967: 28-29) the religious fraternity has a bigger role to play in terms of reconciliation. He further argues that we live in a world characterized by enmity, alienation, injustice among human beings and between communities. In the world today there is an ever more noticeable quest for compatibility among people, groups, governments and religious organization. The major problem in the modern society is the need to reform human community. This is occasioned by the fact that we live in one global system where every injustice has large scale impact thus even the local conflict has remote repercussions.

In principle Hessel argues that reconciliation performs the following crucial tasks:

- a. Transforming the world to make it a better place to live in.
- b. Exposing injustices which will result in repentance and healing both physically and socially.
- c. Overcoming conflict in an effort to realise peace.
- d. Creating confidence in an effort to pursue human freedom.
- e. Making human beings responsible socially, thus viewing others with a positive mind.

Reconciliation, the final stage before the achievement of peace, need to be attained by any group in disagreement. This will guarantee true and lasting peace in a society such as Kenya. In the realization of this notion the youth came up with the following views on reconciliation.

According to the youth therefore, reconciliation is:

- a. Being able to forgive, forget and live together in peace.
- b. Re-establishing normal status.
- c. Bringing together people of different opinion.
- d. Engaging in talks for a better solution (dialogue).
- e. Accepting one another and deciding to move on.
- f. Paving way for peace and coexistence.
- g. Agreeing to solve issues.
- h. Total healing and forgiveness.

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<sup>2</sup> Relationship with God or a higher being.

<sup>3</sup> Relationship with fellow Man

From the youths perspectives listed above, it can be argued that reconciliation is agreeing to live in peace again after a process of healing and forgiveness. This is attested also by the arguments advanced earlier in this paper by Hessel (1967), Wabunhu (2007) and Locheng (2009).

From the frequencies in table 1, need for sound and responsible leadership and role modelling takes the lead, while trade, stopping propaganda and rumour mongering in the public forums and developing a Kenyan culture among others, tail the list of preferred modes of achieving peace, healing and reconciliation according to the youth sampled.

### **3.0 Youth and Provincial Administration Joint Peace Initiatives in Eldoret**

MOYAS in conjunction with the provincial administration in Eldoret has implemented the national peace activities where young people are involved in the nurturing of peace, healing and reconciliation. The national peace activities include:

#### **3.1 Tuelewane Peace Exchange Programs**

*Tuelewane* Peace exchange program is an activity where young people from different cultural backgrounds visit and live amongst each other. These involve youth exchanging by spending two weeks in an identified district. The youth are hosted by the receiving community with a view of learning and appreciating their cultural diversity and promoting peace. In 2009 for example, youth from Uasin Gishu went to Borabu district and vice versa; the youth office in Eldoret noted that this was very successful, since the said youth groups appreciated the exchange programs.

#### **3.2 Caravan Peace Walks**

The caravan peace walks are organized by MOYAS in partnership with the provincial administration. In this case the youth volunteers participate in a peace walk in the areas largely affected by the poll skirmishes. The Eldoret youth for example walked from Eldoret to Nairobi, a journey that took seven days. The caravan walk was intended to boost healing, peace and coexistence. The youth had stop-overs in Molo, Nakuru, Naivasha and other areas deemed to have been seriously affected by the post election violence.

#### **3.3 The Youth Enterprise Development Fund**

This fund focuses on enterprise development as a key strategy to increase economic activities for, and participation of Kenyan youth in nation building. The mandates of the fund include increasing access by young entrepreneurs, providing business development services, facilitating linkages in supply chains, creating market opportunities locally and internationally for products and services of youth enterprises, and facilitating creation of commercial infrastructure to support growth of youth businesses. In addition, the fund facilitates young Kenyans to obtain employment abroad. This is in an effort to develop education among the youth, create and manage wealth with an intention of eradicating poverty not only among the young people but also the nation at large.

#### **3.4 Youth Empowerment Centres (YEC)**

These are centres aimed at addressing the needs of the youth by providing appropriate services and information. Currently there are about 42 operational centres in the country. This is where youth get an opportunity to interact, share and discuss a number of issues ranging from entrepreneurship, ICT<sup>4</sup>, community mobilization, peer counselling, participating in games and sports, and networking to peace building initiatives. In the North Rift for example, the existing peace centres include Kapsaret and Cheplaskei (Eldoret South District), Waniffer (Eldoret East District), and Mafuta in Ziwa (Eldoret North Constituency).

#### **3.5 Kazi kwa Vijana Program**

MOYAS is entrusted to implement *kazi kwa vijana* through mobilization and sensitization of youth across the country. This is aimed at not only increasing the forest cover in the country but also creating a sense of responsibility among the young Kenyans geared towards participation in nation building. Due to high unemployment rates among the youth, MOYAS offered to preoccupy the youth by making them more productive and patriotic. On the same note, they were involved in maintenance of road networks in Eldoret region and other parts of the country.

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<sup>4</sup> Information Communication Technology

Kenya needs to reach this level in peace process. The youth had various proposals towards the realisation of the same.

#### **4.0 Youth Proposals on Ways of Attaining Peace, Healing & Reconciliation in Kenya**

In this study, we summarise the youth proposals, ways and procedures of peace building as follows.

##### **4.1 Civic Education**

The youth suggested that proper civic education needs to be done through various modes like *barazas* to enable the youth acquire knowledge and understanding which would lead to long-lasting peace and harmony. This would lead to an independent and an informed youth capable of making useful decisions without undue influence from irresponsible persons. The youth felt that they lacked essential civic education on conflict and conflict management matters, unity among youth, intercommunity relations and respect for other people's property. Lack of this essential skill on conflict and conflict management, could explain the unfortunate behaviour of the youth witnessed in the 2007/2008 electoral and post electoral period.

##### **4.2 Leadership and Governance**

The youth expressed their desire for responsible, democratic and impartial leadership devoid of corruption, favouritism, and nepotism, where the rule of law is the guiding principle. According to the youth, leaders should be role models in society thus leading by example even in matters of tax payment, reforms and poverty eradication among others. The youth also felt that the government had abdicated her responsibility of ensuring total security for its citizenry to the community. This resulted in the overwhelming participation of the youth in security matters through unlawful, organized and armed gangs<sup>5</sup>. To the youth all these lapses in governance have contributed to the lack of peace and security. The youth also were of the opinion that in order to achieve sustainable peace, security and development it is necessary for equitable distribution and proper use of resources.

##### **4.3 Language Media and Communication**

The youth were of the opinion that the media did not fully play its role of preaching peace and unity among Kenyans. They felt that the media concentrated on airing inflammatory statements, hate speeches, propaganda and polarized views on national issues thus jeopardizing peace. They needed however to offer balanced coverage and respect media ethics. Lund (2001, 2002) argues that media can build trust by featuring common identities, values and concerns across diverse populations and act as a third party in facilitating greater openness and transparency. This media interdependence, communication and accountability are crucial.

Thus we can argue that no society can achieve meaningful and peaceful coexistence among her citizenry without a responsible media. The Kriegler and Waki commissions of inquiry came up with the following findings on the role of media in 2007/2008 PEV in Kenya. The Kriegler commission came up with the following on the media and its role during the crisis. That:

There is need for regulation of freedom of expression and equitable access to media.

The media should enjoy editorial independence from undue influence from both state and corporate actors; that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to disseminate or communicate ideas and information without interference.

The media must be able to form independent and diverse views while at the same time avoiding comments that may generate violent conflict, as was witnessed before and after the 2007 general elections in Kenya.

- a. The media acts as a messenger for freedom of expression and is therefore tasked with difficult choices. It has to decide whether the message it transfers to the consumers should be censored or given raw as received from the expresser.
- b. The media has been a source of both good and bad information.
- c. Abuse of media freedom by media houses, can lead to catastrophic results.
- d. The media regulation has become even more difficult with the increased use of the internet as a source of information.

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<sup>5</sup> *Mungiki, Taliban, Kamjesh and Chinkororo*

- e. The media is reported to have engaged itself in a fierce battle, each trying to outwit the others in covering the elections from the campaign period to the transmission and announcement of the results.

On the other hand, The Waki Commission came up with the following on the media and its conduct during the PEV. That:

- a. Before, during, and after the elections, politicians, government, NGOs, members of the media itself, and parts of the public, all had views about whether and how the spread of information through the print and broadcast media had contributed to the 2007 PEV.
- b. Many recalled with horror, fear, and disgust the negative and inflammatory role of vernacular radio stations in their testimony and statements to the Commission.
- c. Media houses took sides in the run up to the 2007 election, there were complaints that most editors had been compromised, and that some media houses became sensational and unnecessarily alarmed their audiences and inflamed their passions.
- d. The media had been accused of playing a part in fanning the PEV.
- e. The media aired more rather than fewer inflammatory statements by politicians who then would have been exposed to the public for who they were.

#### **4.4 Cross-cultural Marriages**

The youth strongly felt that intercultural marriages in a multicultural society like Kenya should be allowed, nurtured and encouraged since in their opinion this is a source of peaceful coexistence. They argued that the size of any given Kenyan community should not be used to its disadvantage. The youth realized cross cultural marriages as a means of demystifying the Kenyan culture of referring to each other as members of a given community.

#### **4.5 The Agenda IV**

Agenda IV of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation highlights among others three key issues that directly affect the lives of the young people. They include: Poverty and inequality; unemployment among the youth and consolidating national cohesion and unity (MOYAS & UNDP 2009). It further proposes among other propositions the establishment of peace-building and conflict resolution programs geared towards inculcating a civic culture, which tolerates diversity and encourages inter-ethnic cooperation.

#### **4.6 Preoccupation of the Youth**

The youth expressed their concern for lack of proper and meaningful occupation. This rendered them idle and vulnerable to misuse by interested groups. Such misuse was witnessed during the 2007/2008 PEV in Kenya. In order to avoid such occurrence in future, the youth suggested that, sports, cultural celebrations, drama, *kazi kwa vijana* and peace walks be adopted to make them active and productive in society. This will in the long run enhance productivity, togetherness, and nationhood in an effort to realize a long lasting peace in Kenya.

#### **4.7 The role of Religion in Peace Building**

The youth argued that in any given society, religion is a key player in promoting peace. The religious leaders must therefore gear themselves towards using their docket as a platform for promoting peace regardless of ethnic background, race or class. This they felt can be realised through encouraging the youth to acknowledge God, pray, repent, and shun ethnicity.

The issues discussed in this paper are very crucial components in the realization of a peaceful Kenya. Mungai (2009) asserts that:

We aspire for a Kenya where serenity and tolerance prevail within and among communities, within a celebration of our rich diversity. We will confront our difficult history and mould a secure future without violence or fear. We accept that we play an integral part in the elimination of conflict and the quest to harmonize social relations. We shall promote safe havens and harmony within and outside our societies. Peace is within reach.

The Bible<sup>6</sup> commands all to live at peace. This is a very strong message meant to unite all human beings regardless of their colour, race, ethnic and cultural diversity among others. It is therefore our responsibility to ensure that peace prevails at all times.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

This paper was about the perspective of youth in peace building, healing and reconciliation in Kenya. From our study, the perspective of youth in peace, healing and reconciliation cannot be underestimated or ignored. In this case the young people deserve recognition in matters of development geared towards nation building. The participation of the youth in this process is nonetheless important; hence their views and opinions must be factored in any decision making process where peace matters are included. A new approach and rethinking on the role of the youth in peace, healing and reconciliation should be considered with a view of understanding and inculcating their input in nation building.

The 2007/2008 PEV in Kenya can only be history if and when the youths' views, opinion and perspectives in peace, healing and reconciliation are prudently harnessed through proper and deliberate planning by the government and other stake holders. In this regard, no nation can fully achieve meaningful peace without understanding her youth in totality.

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<sup>6</sup> Romans. 12: 18

**Table 1: Table of Frequency of Ways and Procedures Suggested By Youth of Achieving Peace in Kenya**

<b>Procedures, comments, and ways proposed by the youth sampled</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Respect all tribes-from Ogiek to Kikuyus, embrace others' cultures/community/tribe	17	8.13%
Pre-occupy the youth	11	5.26%
Cross cultural marriages	12	5.74%
Trade	1	0.48%
Let the media play its role ; preach peace	6	2.87%
Equal distribution of resources, job opportunities, income ..	24	11.48%
Stop corruption and selfishness	10	4.78%
Stop propaganda and rumour mongering in the public forums	1	0.48%
Pray, repent and acknowledge God	13	6.22%
Prosecute wrong doers, let them face the law	10	4.78%
Provide civic education to all and especially the youth	24	11.48%
Include all in peace building, healing and reconciliation	2	0.96%
Have a truth justice & reconciliation to rectify historical injustices	6	2.87%
Create job opportunities for the youth	11	5.26%
Need for sound and responsible leaders and leadership - role modelling	38	18.18%
Bench-marking from successful countries like Rwanda	1	0.48%
Develop a Kenya culture	1	0.48%
Live together in harmony	1	0.48%
Develop youth for peace programmes	5	2.39%
Institutions of higher learning to admit students from all over the country regardless of their backgrounds-culture, tribe, religion, ...	5	2.39%
Parents should play their role in guiding & moulding the youth	1	0.48%
Address all issues on Agenda IV of the Peace Accord negotiated by Koffi Anan	7	3.34%
Embrace change and technology	1	0.48%
Gender equity and parity	1	0.48%
<b>TOTAL FREQUENCY</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100.00%</b>