Post Conflict Issues, a Reflection on Displacement within Societies in Transition- A Case Study of Post Election Violence in Kenya, Jamhuri IDPs Camp

Florence Wamahiga Githuthu

Abstract

This paper focuses on the relationship between post conflict issues and displacement in Kenya. As a result of the disputed general elections in Kenya in December 2007, there was nationwide protest and an outbreak of violence in most parts of the country. This violence was seemingly driven by ethnicity and perceived political preferences. This outbreak provided an environment conducive to abuse of human rights in all aspects which led to internal displacements. The internally displaced persons (IDPs) took refuge in churches, village chiefs offices, schools, police stations and in public places like the Jamhuri park showground that was turned into one of the camps receiving attention in this study.

Key words: violence; IDPs; politics; conflict; peace.

1. Introduction and Background

Following the post-election violence in Kenya as a result of a disputed presidential result in 2007, a grave humanitarian crisis engulfed the nation. Neighbors turned against each other; hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced; innocent lives have been lost; and an approximate of a thousand plus rape cases reported. This was a shock to Kenyans, as Kenya was once seen as a model of democracy for Africa and has served a severe blow to the socio-economic and political progress of the country.

Initially, the violence was spontaneous and a reaction to the perceived rigging of the elections by the government. The violence was mostly directed towards government facilities and gradually took the form of looting and destruction, and while it also targeted certain tribes, the intention appeared to be not to kill them but rather to expel them and destroy their property. However, violence escalated to worst levels.

According to **Human Rights Watch**, *the pattern of violence subsequently showed planning and organization by politicians, businessmen, village leaders, political activists and local leaders, who enlisted criminal gangs to execute the violence*. Gangs were mobilized and used to unleash violence against certain tribes, and to expel them from their rented residences.

1.1 Rationale and scope of the study

Since the restoration of multiparty politics in Kenya in 1991, violence has been part of its electoral process. Even though this has been the case, the 2007 post election violence shook Kenya and her neighbours and it was unprecedented. It was the most deadly and destructive violence ever experienced in the country. In the past, most violent outbreaks followed the elections, not preceded them. In addition this particular violence was more widespread than previous ones. Except two provinces in the country, all others were affected. Additionally it was experienced in both urban (city and slums) and rural areas In the past election periods, violence was experienced and concentrated in smaller number of districts, mainly in the Rift valley, Western and Coast provinces where there were a mixer of ethnic groups.

Wars are no longer fought only on battlefields between large armies; rather, they are often waged in cities, like Nairobi and villages by amateur militia, driven by long-simmering ethnic, land and religious ideologies and fuelled by a struggle for political and economic control. As a result, more than 90 % of the victims of today's wars are civilians and of those, women and children bear the heaviest burden. In the beginning of 2008, Kenya nearly stood at the brink of civil war. For these and more reasons, the post election violence of 2007 deserves attention.

One of the worst hit areas was Kibera slums, the largest slum in the outskirts of Nairobi city. In this slums live one of the major tribes involved in the presidential election disputes. Not faraway from these slums in Jamhuri showground, home of Nairobi's International Trade Fare. This is the place kibera survivors of the violence escaped to and almost immediately the place was turned into a mass dispersion camp. The shelters were the various sheds and other structures used by various exhibitors of items during trade fares and the usually annual international shows. I was involved in psycho-social support for the survivors in this camp, hence my choice of this case study.

1.1.1 Post Conflict Issues; Displacement

In Kenya, active physical hostilities have since ceased, but the country has for sure not made any more

 Progress towards a desirable level of peace and stability. A form of internal turmoil and discord has continued two years since. The period of time following the end of open warfare and leading into relative stability and peace (or in some cases reverting into clashes) is considered to be a period of transition , *Geoff loane, Lois Austin, and pat Gibbons,* (2007). *The pulse of humanitarian assistance.*

Due the post election violence, there has been numerous and far reaching effects. At the state level, many issues and their responses have been analyzed. At the individual level, these issues have been generally ignored or given minimal attention. It is these effects and these individuals that in humanitarian aid workers need to strive to unearth and address in the most effective manner possible during this transition phase. The humanitarian aid worker need knowledge on what had happened prior to the onset of the transition phase in order to identify needs efficiently and address those needs appropriately. People moved from their places of residence and businesses to places considered safe like police stations, administrative posts, churches and trading centers. Thereafter, they moved to formal camps or were integrated with their relatives and friends in urban centers or their ancestral homes. IDPs were concentrated in Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Central, Nairobi and Coast Province. About 1,900 Kenyans sought refuge in Uganda. The local and international NGOs and CSOs, faith-based groups and individual volunteers played an important role in alleviating the suffering of IDPs by offering refuge, food, shelter, and security.

According to the report by the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence, *the violence documented cases of gruesome sexual violence, including genital cutting among women and forced circumcision among men and boys.* The investigation also reports instances in which families, including children were forced to watch their parents, brothers and sisters being sexually violated. Perpetrators of sexual violence were cited as ordinary citizens, gang members, and members of security forces. The report alleges that perpetrators included members of the General Service Unit (a paramilitary wing of the Kenyan military and Kenyan police consisting of highly trained police officers. Included in this is the regular and administration police and so leaving survivors with deep physical and psychological scars (Trauma), perhaps leading to Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) if not treated.   I came across many who admitted that they were engaging in prostitution arising from desperation to feed their children. Quite a number were living with HIV infection and were able to join a therapy group of People Living With HIV/Aids (PLWH/A). Violence tore the social fabric that each human being needs and more so young children and the youth. In the absence of family support and guidance, such children are in danger of being recruits by fringe militia such as the dreaded Mungiki sect that has been unleashing terror on innocent Kenyan, and Taliban groups. These young people are likely to take part in killings, torture, rape and looting among other unlawful activities. Children from impoverished, marginalized backgrounds or separated from their families are much more likely to be forcibly recruited, coerced and induced to become combatants. They can be manipulated by adults and drawn into violence that they are too young to resist and with consequences they may not imagine or comprehend. Children are the most vulnerable group in conflict settings. They are so susceptible to shocks to their developing process. In addition these children have suffered psychological damage and may be unable to cope with high demand of schooling even if given the opportunity.

Conclusion

Violent conflicts and their ruinous effects and impacts on people's lives demand that host governments renew their commitment to peace and prevention. Emphasize on peaceful co-existence among diverse communities within and between nations. In sum: peace is needed for displaced people to find durable solutions and durable solutions are needed for peace to be consolidated. Or to put it negatively: without peace, there are no durable solutions for displaced persons and without durable solutions; it is difficult for peace to be sustained. Resolving displacement and preventing future displacement is inextricably linked with achieving lasting peace. "Stop the fighting so that we can go home" is a common refrain among displaced communities. Unfortunately, going home is usually not as simple as it sounds; it is more complicated than this.

This is a theme which has been explored by the Representative of committees in Kenya of (IDPs) in the last two years since the post election violence. It is necessary to resettle displaced populations, put in place psycho-social delivery facilities rebuild infrastructure and embark on socio- economic reconstruction. Provide adequate and appropriate basic welfare services including food, clean water, basic health, sanitation, education and shelter. Re-establish reasonable means of livelihood including gainful employment, new governance structures, respect for

human rights and the rule of law. The nature of being displaced is such that the vast majority of displaced persons possess strong desires to return home should there be a sustained improvement in protection. Many displaced persons in Kenya are keen to return to assist in the reconstruction and peace-building processes in their ancestral lands from which they were forced out.

Annexure

List of Acronyms

IDPs	Internally Displaced persons
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
PLWH/A	People living With Hiv/Aids
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder