

## An Assessment of the Response of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church towards 2007 Post-Election Violence in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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### Abstract:

*This paper sought to assess the response of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church towards 2007 Post Election Violence (PEV) in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya using Eldoret East as the scope for the Church District. By the following objectives; finding out church response as a Peacemaker in conflict, assessing response in Emergency Provision, and examining response in psycho-social support the researchers undertook to assess in the overall how the church responded in the PEV. The Seventh-day Church in Kenya and especially after the 2007 and 2008 post-election violence became one among church actors in the PEV. This study finds a lacuna in peace actors apart from the traditional Faith-Based Organizations; the Catholic church seems to have taken a visible stake whereas SDA like other groups seemed not to have taken a visible frontal role. Based on this, the researchers got interested in what motivated its different stand from other Faith-Based Organizations. Using descriptive design and qualitative research methodology this research used a target sample derived from Pastors, Church members among the twelve churches, Church leaders, and government officials who were Seventh-day Adventist church members. A total of 144 respondents participated in the study employed purposefully. In the end, the researchers picked important information which was reported in the study using indirect reporting method as a number of respondents at the time of study felt the issues were sensitive to their safety. The Biblical Mission theory of Jesus Christ underpinned this study; as used by the SDA, it proposes that the existence of the church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ which unifies people of all walks of life from socio-economic and political conflicts. The theory guides the response towards violence because the church shall remain neutral while preaching the gospel and at the same time extending charitable acts to the affected. Finally, it determined the kind of response the church took which majorly involved neutrality to all parties in violence while using the church charity institutions to administer the needs of the people (victims of PEV). The study thus concludes that the church indeed responded in a non-traditional method employed by other actors to conflicts/violence in emergency*

**Key words:** Election Violence/ SDA and Violence/ Church and Election/ 2007 Election/ 2007 PEV/ PEV in Kenya.

### 1.0 Introduction and Background of the Study

This study attempted to discuss the 2007 post-election violence and the response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Eldoret East district in Kenya. Eldoret East district is one of the districts in the Rift Valley province of Kenya. Its neighboring districts include Trans Nzoia to the north, Wareng to the south, Keiyo to the east, and Soy to the west. As Karanja and Mwasi (2009) inform, this area is densely populated due to conducive climatic conditions for practicing agriculture. While it's historically believed that the native occupants of this area were the Kalenjins and the Maasai, the Human Rights Watch (November 1993) notes that there are many different people today from other ethnic groups in Kenya living and working in Eldoret East district. For example, both the Kikuyu and the Abagusii people are involved in businesses as well as practicing agriculture. However, there has been lack of peaceful coexistence among these ethnic communities for a long time.

Kenya was left with deep scars by the violence that erupted in the aftermath of the disputed Presidential election of 27 December 2007. In just a matter of weeks, Kenya was transformed from one of Africa's most stable democracies into chaos. The political and ethnic violence left more than a thousand people dead, and over 350,000 people were forced to flee their homes as violence, and machete-wielding gangs roamed the streets (Amnesty International USA, 2008; CIPEV, 2008). A coalition government headed by the former president Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga –the two candidates claiming that each had won the presidential election- was agreed three months after the disputed elections. With the coalition agreement, the post election violence ceased, but the underlying triggers, extent, and consequences of electoral violence in Kenya have still to be fully addressed.

The majority of studies of conflict have tended to focus on cross-country comparisons, or in the case of country studies, to gather scant evidence, often anecdotal, which limits the understanding of what are the risk factors for violence. This study aimed at assessing the Seventh-day Adventist Church's response in dealing with the conflict since it was part of community where the conflicts occurred (Collier and Vicente, 2008; Kalvas, 2008; Barron et al., 2009; Bellows and Miguel, 2009) by assessing the individual and local factors that increased the risk of being a victim of electoral violence. The ordeal of the disputed election reduced trust across ethnic groups, a key element of social capital among communities. International experience has shown that in situations where (ethnic) groups distrust each other and are afraid of being victimized, this fear might drive them to resort to violence first in a preemptive move to minimize damage (Bardhan, 1997). Taking into account that having experienced conflict in the recent past is a good predictor for future conflict (Collier et al. 2008), Kenya is at risk of experiencing violence in the forthcoming 2017 general elections if institutions are not strengthened to cope with the underlying grievances, the need for justice and the mistrust among ethnic groups.

This study, therefore, was meant to investigate the causes and effects of 2007 PEV, as well as the Seventh-Day Adventist Church's response to this scourge in Eldoret East district. According to the report by Independent Review Commission (December 2007), Eldoret East district is characterized by bloodshed, tension, insecurity, destruction of life and property, and forced migration. It had experienced a recurrence of tension since 1992 when multiparty politics was inaugurated in Kenya and during the general elections of 1997, and 2007. For all these years, the people of Eldoret East district have suffered from ethnic clashes which have affected the economy of the country. During the 2007 PEV in Eldoret East, various sectors were negatively affected. For instance, the water sector was affected in four main areas namely; operations, equipment, physical facilities, and staff. There was a big challenge of providing water for internally displaced persons

The 2007 Post election violence in Eldoret East is a major concern to the government due to the havoc caused not only in the political sphere but also the economic, social sectors, psychological and religious dimensions. It is generally believed that the Christian faith's mission in Eldoret East district is to promote peace and unity among the people. Similarly, the Seventh-day Adventist church was among the many that were affected during the same period. This situation raises concerns in relation to how the Seventh-day Adventist Church responded to the 2007 PEV in Eldoret East district.

### **1.1 Study Objectives**

The objectives that guided this study included;

- i. Finding out church response as a Peace maker in conflict,
- ii. Assess the church response in Emergency Provision, and
- iii. Examine the church response in psycho-social support.

### **2.0 Statement of the Problem**

Conflicts related to election violence have rocked Kenya over time through its electoral cycle since independence. Several actors; state and non – state actors, religious and non – religious actors responded to the post 2007/8 election violence. The Seventh-day Church in Kenya and especially after the 2007 and 2008 post-election violence became one of such actors. Despite their role in the PEV, it seems such organizations were overshadowed by the government and non – governmental organizations. This study finds lacuna in peace actors apart from the traditional. From the Faith Based Organizations again, the Catholic church seems to have taken a visible stake. It is of interest to investigate the response of Seventh-day Adventist church in the PEV in Uasin Gishu having been a hot spot for the after election violence. The study of church's response such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in election related conflicts/violence is such an important contribution to knowledge of conflict since church members are drawn from different ethnic backgrounds which can create a paradigm in conflict management and resolution. It is on this note that the study intended to find out how the Seventh-day Adventist Church responded as a peacemaker in conflict, assess the Church response in emergence provision and examine the Church response in psycho-social support during to the 2007-2008 Post-Election Violence in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya and in essence what motivated it different from other Faith Based Organizations.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study was descriptive in nature and employed qualitative research methodology. Qualitative methodology was necessary in assessing the response of Seventh-day Adventist Church towards the 2007

post-election violence in Uasin Gishu County. It allowed the researchers to ascertain the views of different types of people. The sample size for the study was derived from Pastors, Church members among the twelve churches, Church leaders, and government officials who were Seventh-day Adventist church members. A total of 144 respondents participated in the study. The study employed purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling enabled the researcher to pick out the key subjects who had rich information needed in the study. From these responses, the researchers picked important information which was reported in the study using indirect reporting method as a number of respondents at the time of study felt the issues were sensitive to their safety. The study used interview schedules for collecting data in regards to the response of the Seventh Day Adventist church towards the 2007 post-election violence in Uasin Gishu County.

#### **4.0 Theoretical Framework**

The church's (SDA) response towards the PEV is related to its response to political matters. The theory behind the church's existence is anchored on Mathew 28:19.... (Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world) and the Three Angels message of Book of Revelation. The latter part (Revelation) affirms that; Revelation 14:6-7 ....'And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a LOUD VOICE, fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.' Revelation 14:8 ....'And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' Revelation 14:9-12 ....'And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.'

We consider this as Mission theory; it proposes that the existence of the church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ which unifies people from all walks of life from socio – economic and political conflicts. From this backdrop, Christ in His kingdom is the author of peace, but the world in which we live has a master who thrives in chaos (conflicts) drawn from the love of the world. When the world understands these messages in the scriptures above, then the need of conflict can be resolved. This theory guides the response towards violence because the church shall remain neutral while preaching the gospel and at the same time extending charitable acts to the affected.

#### **5.0 An Assessment of the Response of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Towards 2007 Post Election Violence in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.**

The religious leaders, churches, civil society, the media and the international community, as well as the all political parties and government, have made urgent calls for restraint, peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In responding to 2007 PEV, the ecumenical role cannot be underscored enough in the entire democratic process. The Church is not only considered to be the voice of the voiceless, but also the voice for peace especially during such potentially violent processes as is being experienced in Kenya at the moment. The church plays a critical role because when it speaks, people listen and follow. This study endeavoured to find out the contribution of the church towards the 2007 PEV.

Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, (10<sup>th</sup> May 2008) has this to say:

“The need today is for Christians who are active and critical, who don't accept situations without analyzing them inwardly and deeply. We no longer want masses of people like those who have been trifled with for so long. We want persons like fruitful fig trees, who can say yes to justice and no to injustice and can make use of the precious gift of life, regardless of the circumstances.”

It is the responsibility of the church and each Christian to take his or her beliefs and values into the public arena and apply them to the important social issues of the day. This is a significant part of kingdom work. Part of our responsibility as Christians is to exercise compassion and love for others in tangible ways and refrain from all forms of activities that harm fellow human beings, property and even the environment like violence. Christians should feed the hungry, comfort the sorrowing, visit the sick, preach peace and break up barriers that bring the spirit of conflicts and violence. As part of their kingdom service, Christian plumbers plumb since there will not be any leaks in the kingdom. In kingdom service, Christian teachers teach in the sure hope that while now we see darkly, one day we will see face to face, and in that day there won't be any

ignorance. As kingdom workers, Christian truckers truck because in the kingdom the good things God has created need to be distributed far and wide.

Also, individual Christians can singly, or through Christian organizations, address the government for solutions to problems that are within the societies like conflicts and violence and the government's proper sphere. One of the simplest ways to carry out this responsibility is to vote for those persons whom people believe will address the problems of the day effectively. This should be done in peace at all times. Working with Christian organizations and churches, Christians can influence government policies for good in matters of electoral processes. Christians are called to be responsible, compassionate, law-abiding citizens as to avoid conflicts and violence and even help deter other who want to sow seeds of dissension.

Since violence disrupts communities and politics is an instrument for protecting the needs of a society, the church has a role to play in the achievements of the people's needs. The 'Manifesto' Jesus presented at the beginning of his ministry at Nazareth has a socio-political tone (Lk. 4: 18-19). Liberation theologians propose that "religion must be able to inform politics without taking it over into itself." That is why the church has a role in bringing peace. Jesus said, "Peace be with you; as the father sent me, so I send you," (John 20:21). The church is on a mission to bring peace to the world. The church as a sacrament has the language of peace, reconciliation, and anticipation of God's Kingdom. The church, therefore, has to preach the message of reconciliation in the political arena. Jesus is a mediator between God and humanity. He came to bring peace between the two conflicting parties. The church as the body of Christ (I Cor.12.27) has to continue the work of Christ.

It has to be noted that reconciliation is a process of give-and-take. It is a celebration of love and unity where both groups have to sacrifice a certain position of their interest. It should also be noted that it cannot be brought to the conflicting parties, but it can only be facilitated by a third party. Bloodfield, et al., (1998), state that in managing conflict there should be foresighted leaders at the negotiation table who are not emotional and who are willing to have peace. The presumption is that peace and reconciliation can only be attempted when the conflicting parties are willing. The church can come with the message of forgiveness (Eph 4:31-32). This forgiveness has to be reciprocal.

In the 2007 poll, churches through NCKC urged leaders like Mr. Kibaki and his rivals to respect the results of the balloting. Specifically, the SDA Church's influential role was meant that politicians looked to it to score political points, for instance, candidates could speak before congregations. In addition to this, the Church joined several domestic and international observers to observe the electoral process. Kenya's religious leaders played an important role prior to the elections, particularly urging followers to vote and refrain from violence.

When violence broke out at the beginning of the year, hundreds of thousands of people went into internally displaced person camps. They required emergency supplies support. Later in March, the IDP camps experienced a new influx of people fleeing their homes due to increasing political tensions when there were delays in the formation of the cabinet. Apart from the Internally Displaced Persons, there were very many Kenyans living in arid and semi-arid areas which, during this period, required food assistance.

In partnership with the Lutheran World Federation, the Council of Western region distributed bags of maize and bags of beans at the Turbo camp and among the displaced persons in Teso district. Household kits were received and distributed at the IDP centers in Sirisia and Chebkai. Churches in other regions donated food to the displaced persons in Coast and Central regions (Ochieng March-April, 2007). With assistance from Terres des Hommes and the churches, the Council in the Rift Valley assisted many affected persons. Some were provided with medical supplies whereas some especially children were served with trauma healing services during the period (Ochieng March-April, 2007).

The study discovered that the church leaders together with other actors participated in various visits to the areas affected by the 2007 post election violence in Eldoret East district. However, not all the affects individuals were visited. The visits were aimed at creating an environment that would enable the displaced persons to return to their homes even though they were not elaborate. It also gave the actors opportunities to receive firsthand information on the peace situation in these areas thereby enabling them to shape their initiatives appropriately. Since the IDPs and the home communities participated in these visits, they expressed their fears and concerns to each other and also to the government officials present. Apart

from these visits, the church participated in community psychosocial assessments done in collaboration with other agencies Eldoret East district which is one of the four regions that were most affected by the violence. The respondents of the study affirmed that through the visits, the church through its members and leaders was able to help various 2007 PEV victims. The church, in general, achieved the following:

- It provided anti-retroviral drugs to some of the HIV positive victims who were in the IDPs and in homes
- It provided reproductive health information especially to the youth who are out of school
- Members of the church were taught about HIV and AIDS especially on caring for themselves and those who are infected and affected
- The church addressed issues of stigma and discrimination which were rampant among the people in IDPs and those who had been displaced
- Group therapy meetings were conducted for persons living with HIV and AIDS. This led to increased hope and optimism as they collectively shared and encouraged one another in their daily lives.
- Some persons living with HIV and AIDS were empowered economically through the establishment of income-generating activities
- The Churches through the local leaders showed some considerable support to several humanitarian projects by giving venues of meetings, providing overall leadership at the community level, and helping in the mobilization of the congregation to participate in the activities. This action has particularly boosted the impact of the activities carried out and the sustainability of the project.

Eldoret East district and its environs were among the most affected areas by the post election violence of 2007. In this regard, solidarity visits of the top Church leadership to these affected communities did not only begin a process of healing and reconciliation but also helped show solidarity with the churches and affected areas. In my observation, most of the 2007 PEV victims appreciated the pastoral visits done during that period even though not all the affected people were reached.

#### **6.0 The church response in conflict**

The church's response to conflict takes numerous forms; be it as a peacemaker, as emergency support giver, and as psychosocial support giving institution. All these are summed widely as getting involved in the mission. The concern of mission is doing good work assigned by another (Jn. 13:34 - A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another) in conformity to the objective of the mission (Mth. 28: 19-20 - Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all).

At the very onset, it is proper to construe according to this study that the response as a peacemaker is synonymous with the role played. Religious groups and churches traditionally play important roles in society, especially around peace-building. Alston (2009) uses four categories of religious intervention: advocates, intermediaries, observers, and educators. According to him, advocates are those who fight to empower the disadvantaged and to restructure relationships and unjust social structures. He gives an example of such advocates as the Roman Catholic Church of Zimbabwe, which during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle advocated for truth-telling as a way of healing the wounds that were created during the struggle that ended in 1979. He adds that Intermediaries include those in fact-finding, good offices, facilitation, and conciliation.

Mediation includes the role played by church leaders who successfully mediated a peace agreement in Sudan in 1972. Williams (2007), notes that observers provide a physical presence that is intended to discourage violence, corruption, and human rights violations. In addition to what Williams notes above, USIP (2001), in 'Catholic Contributions to International Peace' adds that such observers have been in various countries and situations monitoring and observing elections and any other national activity that could be controversial and attract national or international attention.

In Zimbabwe, national elections have been observed by the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. Turray, (2007) argues that education could be in a variety of forms, ranging from awareness programs, civic education, and training in human rights and other basic social and political matters. He offers that a particular example is the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe, which, through its agent Silveira House, offers various training programs to communities free of charge. He observes that other religious denominations also have organizations dedicated to training and community empowerment.

Besides these organizations, religious institutions have traditionally provided education to communities through missionary schools. Southall, (1999) narrates that it is these schools that educated most of the early African scholars, particularly the most prominent ones, by providing balanced curricula and well-equipped facilities, unlike the few government-run institutions that were influenced by the colonial apartheid system. He adds that religious leaders also influence society; their public pronouncements and actions matter. He is of the view that the degree of popular credibility, trust, and moral authority vested in religious leaders enables them to direct events on the ground. He points out that retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, for example, has often been asked to lead peace-building efforts around the world.

The Seventh Day Adventist, in her mission, has narrated different methods used in reaching out many converts. One of them is healing. The church states, 'Affirming the biblical principles of the well-being of the whole person, we make the preservation of health and the healing of the sick a priority and through our ministry to the poor and oppressed, co-operate with the Creator in His compassionate work of restoration.' In light of the above, (TED Working Policy 2012-2013) the Values Statement of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church states: Our sense of mission is driven by the realisation that every person, regardless of circumstances, is of infinite value to God and thus deserving of respect and dignity. Through God's grace, every person is gifted for and needed in the diverse activities of the Church family. Our respect for diversity, individuality, and freedom is balanced by regard for the community. We are one—a world-wide family of faith engaged in representing the reign of God in our world through ethical conduct, mutual regard, and loving service. Our faithfulness to God involves a commitment to and support of His body, the Church.

According to Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), (<https://adra.org/8-12-magnitude-earthquake-hits-mexico>. Retrieved on 10 September 2017), it is the mission of the church to participate in providing relief during emergence cases. For example, in Mexico, the church provided shelter and food items to close to 2 million people who were affected by the massive quake that hit the Southern coast of Mexico on September 7 that led to the mass loss of lives. The aim of the study was to assess the church response in emergence provision in 2007 post-election violence in UasinGishu County, Kenya.

The church has a very well organized system of trying to reach the victims during an emergency. On this note, the church, through ADRA, (<https://adra.org/adra-prepares-response-to-flooding-and-landslides-in-nepal>) articulates the contribution of the church in emergence provision. It says, 'The ADRA network is activating an emergency response in the wake of flooding and landslides in Nepal. In response to this widespread destruction, ADRA Nepal has distributed emergency food, shelter resources, and hygiene and female dignity kits, household items, and bedding to thousands of those affected.' Responding to floods and landslides was not the focus of the study. Instead, the study anticipated finding out clear information on the role of the church in emergence provision vis-à-vis UasinGishu County in 2007 post-election violence through the respondents.

In trying to meet the physical needs of the suffering, the church works towards accomplishing her mission. She emulates Jesus Christ who fed the hungry and healed the sick. (Bible Verse). On this note, the church has sent a message to the world about the African situation. The church (<https://adra.org/emergency-millions-starving-in-worlds-largest-food-emergency>) says, 'Your urgent help is needed now! 20 million people in East Africa are starving in the largest food emergency in the world. Famine has already set in within South Sudan, and families in Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, and Kenya are struggling to find food every day.' It is not clear as to whether the response of the church was relevant to the problem under investigation. However, the study sought to find out how the church responded to the UasinGishu case.

Narrating on the role of the church in an emergency, the church's agency stands tall to define some of her achievements. In (<https://adra.org/flooding-in-brazil-affects-thousands/>), ADRA Brazil activated their emergency response mobile unit to reach families following flooding that affected around 9,000 people. The mobile unit allowed ADRA staff to reach those in need with meals, washing, and drying of clothes, as well as psychosocial support as they recovered from the emergency. However, how the church responded to the victims of the 2007 post-election violence in UasinGishu remained a major concern of the study.

In the Philippines, the church has made a tremendous contribution in an emergency. This is evident in (<https://adra.org/adra-responding-in-aftremath-of-fire-in-philippines/>), where an explanation is given. It says that around 2,000 families were affected by a large fire in the Navotas fish port of Manila, which was a notoriously impoverished area. More than 1,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, leaving those affected

living in shelters without the basic household items. ADRA Philippines responded to provide kits for hundreds of these families. The respondents of the study would establish facts concerning the problem under investigation.

Writing on the Indonesian case, the church was not left behind in emergence provision. It's cited in (<https://adra.org/adra-indonesia-providing-shelter-after-earthquake/>), 'Shelter kits will be distributed to more than 900 people who were displaced by the recent earthquake in Indonesia. ADRA Indonesia has conducted assessments and will be distributing the shelter kits to displaced households in Pidie Jaya district, where the shelter is an immediate need.' The kind of approach the church used in providing for the clash victims, however, was the aim of the study.

Apart from Africa and Asia, the church has recorded her emergence response in other parts of the world. In Central America, for example, the church responded to the devastating hunger that hit Haiti. Through ADRA, the church states in (<https://adra.org/adra-sending-2,580,000-meals-to-haiti/>), 'ADRA has partnered with Stop Hunger Now to deliver 2,851,200 meals to people in Haiti as part of their ongoing Hurricane Matthew disaster response.' Whereas the above record seems impressive, the question about how the same church organisation responded to the 2007 post-election violence at UasinGishu County in Kenya was not answered yet. Therefore, the study intended to answer the question through the respondents.

Similarly, in India, the church has indicated how best she has tried to extend a hand during an emergency. For example, during the floods, the church intervened. In (<https://adra.org/flooding-in-india-leads-to-adra-response/>), the church demonstrates her response. It says, 'ADRA India is distributing non-food items (NFI) to households who have been hit by a flood emergency impacting Bihar state near the border with Nepal. Staff from ADRA India carried out needs assessments with local partners and is activating their response to target 200 of the most vulnerable households affected by the flood waters.'

Since violence disrupts communities and politics is an instrument for protecting the needs of a society, the church has a role to play in the achievements of the people's needs. The 'Manifesto' Jesus presented at the beginning of his ministry at Nazareth has a socio-political tone (Lk. 4: 18-19). Liberation theologians propose that "religion must be able to inform politics without taking it over into itself." That is why the church has a role in bringing peace. Jesus said, "Peace be with you; as the father sent me, so I send you," (John 20:21). The church is on a mission to bring peace to the world. The church as a sacrament has the language of peace, reconciliation, and anticipation of God's Kingdom. The church, therefore, has to preach the message of reconciliation in the political arena. Jesus is a mediator between God and humanity. He came to bring peace between the two conflicting parties. The church as the body of Christ (I Cor.12.27) has to continue the work of Christ.

It has to be noted that reconciliation is a process of give-and-take. It is a celebration of love and unity where both groups have to sacrifice a certain position of their interest. It should also be noted that it cannot be brought to the conflicting parties, but it can only be facilitated by a third party. Bloodfield, et al., (1998), state that in managing conflict there should be foresighted leaders at the negotiation table who are not emotional and who are willing to have peace. The presumption is that peace and reconciliation can only be attempted when the conflicting parties are willing. The church can come with the message of forgiveness (Eph 4:31-32). This forgiveness has to be reciprocal.

The Church's charisma and likewise (Wafula, 2014) her unique nature vis-à-vis reconciliation at whatever level needs to be achieved and this lies in the fact that she always goes back to that reconciliation at the source. For by reason of her essential mission, the Church feels an obligation to go to the roots of the conflict, in order to bring healing and to re-establish, so to speak, an equally original reconciliation which will be the effective principle of all true reconciliation. Therefore, the Church has the mission of proclaiming this reconciliation<sup>63</sup>. In the context of the change now taking place on the continent, the church has a role to play in reducing or eliminating all together the root causes of simmering or open conflicts and effecting true peace. One way of effecting true peace is by becoming agents of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The role of the church in Kenya's politics is traceable to the advent of colonialism. Peters for the instance has shown that during the colonial period, the church and state were fused, He characterises Peacemaking and Democratization in Africa; Theoretical Perspectives and Church Initiatives (Magesa, 1996). It is evident (Peters, 2012) to note the characteristics and skills of a successful mediator in conflict situations, in our case, the church. Indeed the church has impartiality regarding issues of dispute; it

commands the respect of and is acceptable to all protagonists; it has the knowledge and skill to deal out with challenging issues of conflict.

Wrong has shown how the church led the challenge against one party authoritarianism, politically instigated ethnic clashes and suppression of opposition political parties (Wrong, 2009). They bring out the role of prominent clergymen, such as Bishop Alexander Kipsang Muge, Rev. Timothy Njoya, Ndingi Mwana a'nzeeki, David Gitari, Bishop Henry Okullu, Peter Njenga and Maurice Otunga. The clergy used their church positions to advocate for change, condemn the excesses of government such as instigating ethnic clashes and corruption, educate the general public and facilitate opposition politics. The public education role (Standard Report, 2007) was furthered by the National Ecumenical Civic Education. An umbrella organisation established by the National Council of Churches, Church Province of Kenya and Kenya's Episcopal Conference. Also, the Catholic Church, which was more immune to factional infighting, used pastoral letters to advocate and mobilize for change. For instance, in 1992, it issued a pastoral letter, 'A call for justice love and peace' which was hailed by the media as marking the end of Moi authoritarian system because, the Bishops spoke in one voice and unlike other denominations, there were no feuds in the Catholic Church. The Churches role as an agent of societal transformation, however, has been eroded since the Ufungamano initiative. Willis observes that since 2002 when Moi left power, religious actors have been severely divided along ethnic and political lines (Willis, 2009).

The history of the past century ([www.adventistpeace.org/peacemaking](http://www.adventistpeace.org/peacemaking)) testifies not only to the human capacity for inhumanity, but also to the creativity, courage, and effectiveness of nonviolent peacemakers from many religious traditions. From the great Salt March led by Gandhi in India to the Montgomery bus boycott led by Martin Luther King Jr.; from Danish nonviolent resistance to the Nazis during World War II to the Polish Solidarity Movement during the Soviet era; from the National League for Democracy in Burma to the Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe—countless persons and movements have answered the challenge of violence not in kind but by bearing witness to the possibility of another Way. Some of these individuals have been Seventh-day Adventists.

There has been dismal corporate involvement of the Seventh-day Adventist church in peace making in conflicts especially perceived political in nature on the basis of other players approaches. Questions have lingered as to why this is so. Many adherents to the SDA faith would understand the theological leaning of the church as far as peace is concerned whereas others may question the uniqueness and sometimes think it adamant. In John 14:27; King James Version (KJV) Christ is quoted saying, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The place of peacemaking ultimately lies with the understanding of the source of peace (Jesus Christ). Lack of this or even different understandings on this may even further deteriorate peace efforts. At this level in our understanding, the church responds to imbue with skills individuals so that they can respond by reaching other human beings in being agents to peacemaking.

Through its global institution (ADRA) in reaching out to people by carrying out the mandate of the mission, the church has often got involved in emergency activities. The roll call on this is treated as outcomes of the mission. From the ([www.adra.org](http://www.adra.org)), there is an indication of ongoing response. "We are changing the world, one life at a time. ADRA works in more than 130 countries to bring long-term development programs and immediate emergency response to communities through a network of global offices. ADRA is providing disaster response in Puerto Rico following the devastation left by Hurricane Maria. ADRA Puerto Rico was in action immediately after Hurricane Irma, and then again after Maria. Together with the local Seventh-day Adventist Church community, they have been helping to clear debris from roads and property, as well as providing as much ...". The response is usually a composite one in nature that looks at the wider objectives including psycho-social support.

## 7.0 Study Summaries

Respondents affirmed that the church has been playing an important role in the peace-building work in Eldoret East. It has negotiated with both tribes in advance and cleared the way for higher peace talks. It also cooperates with influential leaders in the area who play a key role in achieving peace. There were similar attempts to organize similar peace meetings before the 2007 PEV, but they failed either due to the lack of participants or general distrust. But after the 2007 PEV, the turn up has been good. The church has been



supporting the government to gather the participants, and at the same time, it has worked as technical support for the mediation.

In the run up to the 2007 General Election, the church was seen as being openly partisan, along ethnic lines. Christian believers were clearly confused by conflicting “prophesies” of prominent Christian leaders which predicted victory for various candidates and prayed and anointed them as God’s choice for President. The uncertainty generated by these conflicting views fuelled the divisions in the Church (Romero May 10<sup>th</sup> 2008).

Reports from the respondents indicated the church leaders used civic education, prayer meetings, and other occasions to openly campaign for their preferred parties and candidates. When asked to comment on the role of the church after the 2007 PEV, some of the respondents said they saw the church took sides with either of PNU or ODM depending on the occasion and place. The church of Christ was not seen playing any role.

Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that when the political crisis erupted leading to widespread violence in the wake of the disputed presidential election results, the Church struggled to find its voice. Church leaders could not rise above their partisanship and give the country a clear moral direction, and the church was reduced to a helpless spectator to the emerging tragic drama. The burning of over 400 churches during the violence was a sad reminder that many had come to regard churches not as sacred and neutral places of worship and sanctuary, but as part of the contested terrain of partisan politics. In the immediate aftermath of the elections, the overwhelming impression was that Christians had been betrayed by their own brothers and sisters and their own leaders.

It is clear that the SDA Church plays a critical role in politics in any country, especially in the creating and furtherance of both positive and negative ideology, particularly in Africa now. In the Kenyan context, the church lost credibility as it was perceived not to be on the side of justice. Similarly, in Eldoret East district, there is a general feeling that the church took clear sides either along party or ethnic lines. This has resulted in fragmentation within the churches and a loss of its credibility amongst the population

The study established that some Church leaders were influential by subtly advocating their candidates of choice, and in some instances coming out with straightforward endorsements. This move in many ways compromised the perception of neutrality of religious leaders and religious bodies that should have been embodied, further entrenching the already clear divisions in Eldoret. On a positive note, the church organized a prayer breakfast for political party leaders to promote a peaceful, fair and secure electoral process which resulted in the political parties signing a peace charter. However, politicians used the same platform to incite citizens. It has been a tradition in Kenya for politicians to go to churches on Sundays and Saturdays and use the forum to propagate their opinions. They do this since they know they can get large masses in churches.

The announcement and subsequent swearing in of Mwai Kibaki, after the 2007 elections, sparked immediate protests that resulted in the death, brutal attacks and destruction of property amongst communities especially those in the opposition strongholds as outlined in the background. Respondents felt that SDA Church leaders saw their communities suffering this unforeseen violence, loss of hope and deepening hatred along ethnic and political party lines of the population. However, churches did not categorically speak with one voice, which should have otherwise encouraged justice, peace, and integrity. Many leaders were equally traumatized, dejected, alarmed and uncertain about the next steps of this shattering political and humanitarian crisis.

The study established that in January 2008, when Kenya was falling apart and looking for moral leadership, the SDA Church lurched and could not give a clear course of action. The peace agreement signed between the politicians in February gave them some breathing space, but the root causes that led to the crisis were far from resolved. The SDA Church failed to take advantage of the experiences of previous violence in Eldoret and of the ceasefire to get its own house in order so that in the event of a future flare-up, it is able to speak with authority and to continue leading the country along the treacherous path to healing and true reconciliation.

Another avenue through which the church failed was in land reform. The unequal distribution of land lies at the heart of Kenya’s political problems. It was unearthed that the church was one of the institutions which were derailing the push for more equitable land policies to ensure that this perpetual threat to national stability is dealt with once and for all. Respondents said that the church has been reluctant to challenge the status quo in land distribution. Respondents affirmed that mainstream churches including SDA and catholic

among other are among the biggest land owners but they their possession was legal. However, mushrooming evangelical churches were mentioned as having been irregularly or illegally allocated public land during the Moi regime. Many churches are built on grabbed land in Eldoret. Some respondents had the feeling that the burning of the church at Kiambaa was as a result of anger from local people who felt that the church was grabbing their land.

### 8.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

Whatever the future holds for Kenya and its fructuous journey from dictatorship to democracy, underdevelopment to development, the study findings acknowledged that the 2007 PEV crisis was a complicated history rooted in the political economies of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and neo-liberalism that has actually characterized Kenya over the last century. This is to suggest that at the 2007 PEV moment and the political crisis in general, is rooted in complex historical forces that go beyond 'tribalism' as it is currently being discussed even today. This does not dismiss the role of ethnicity or particular leaders (religious and non religious), it is merely to point out the need to set this crisis both in the context of broader historical forces that have propelled Kenya to this moment and in the conditions that might impel Kenya out of it. It's true that the SDA Church responded either positively or negatively to the 2007 PEV.

As part of a society struggling to come out of a deeply traumatic experience, the church in Kenya has been left deeply wounded, disoriented and almost without a voice. Fortunately, the church can learn from the experiences of churches in other countries and other ages such as Germany after the 2nd World War or South Africa after apartheid. To do so, the church must quickly move to recover its voice, restore its credibility and play its prophetic role in advancing the cause of justice, healing, and reconciliation in the wake of the Kenyan crisis. As South African theologian, Charles Villa-Vicencio reminds us in his book, (*A Theology of Social Reconstruction*, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2008), Unless the Church is able in these situations (of reconstruction) to translate the values of the gospel into practice and proclaim its beliefs in a language that makes sense even to those who are no longer interested in its views, it may well have no significant role at all to play in the period of reconstruction. This means that unless the church's theological values make sense to those beyond its own membership, and are given expression through secular debate in a language understandable to a broad constituency of people it may not be heard at all.

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