

# Kenya for Kenyans: A Future for All

Although the intra and inter ethnic meetings were difficult and even negative, the fact that people took time to meet is an indication that they still have hope that their grievances can be addressed peacefully. The great interest in a new Constitution, across the country, is also a sign that Kenyans still see a future together. How should a future for all be developed?

## Defining The Truth: Sorting real from imagined ethnic perceptions

In the last two years, the history of Kenya has been written and rewritten on the streets, in sitting rooms, on radio, on the internet and in public rallies. History has been distorted and slanted to support ethnic grievances. Various ethnic groups, like the Maasai, feel their role and sacrifices in the colonial struggle are overlooked. Kalenjins, especially the Nandi, claim that they were discriminated against in the restoration of the 'White Highlands' to Africans. Some Kikuyus say that the Kenyatta regime simply corrected the colonial injustices against the Kikuyus and did not necessarily favour Kikuyus. A Truth, Justice and Reconciliation effort is necessary in sharing everyone's truth and developing a Kenyan story that all can identify with.

## Ensuring political inclusion

The new Constitution should ensure adequate and equal representation at the national and at the local levels. The Presidency that is the source of do-or-die politics will be tempered by a powerful National Assembly, Senate and independent Judiciary. The Boundaries Review Commission should correct the constituency gerrymandering of the past and create fair and equitable representation. A new Constitution is therefore integral to a new Kenya that includes all groups in shaping the country's future.

## Reducing inequalities within and between regions

Poverty in the midst of wealth is the basis for strife in Kenya. This inequality and the associated sense of injustice along ethnic and racial lines is the key ingredient for conflict. Economic injustice is the grievance that selfish and dubiously wealthy politicians exploit, without engaging sincere efforts to resolve it.

A new political paradigm is required that regards the extreme economic inequalities in Kenya as unacceptable and effectively works to uplift all out of poverty. Unprecedented political will to reduce poverty is necessary for policy and planning to

seriously address poverty and temper ethnic grievances.

## Protecting common resources

The demand in Rift Valley and the Coast, for example, that land is owned by local people is easy to understand but cannot be the future for Kenya. Coastarians need more than land. They also need services, supplies, markets that a cross section of local and international investors, who also require land, provide. The Kalenjins need to protect forests so that the Maasai and others get water downstream. Kenyans have many common resources including forests, the sea and the port, lakes and rivers, roads, the air, railways, airports, banks, government offices, hospitals, schools, the media, peace and security and our national image. Kenya's future includes protecting our common resources and ensuring those who create and protect these resources also benefit from them.

## Electing nationalists who represent their constituencies and also have an understanding of the needs of other Kenyan communities

The current political model of fighting for 'our communities', at all costs, is a recipe for mutually assured destruction. Our next Parliament needs to have leaders who not only understand what their constituents expect from them but also understand what other communities fear and need. These leaders will understand that the needs of their constituencies are not incompatible with the need for water for the Kambas, roads for the Luos, education for Somalis, security for Kikuyus, land tenure for indigenous Coast people and citizenship rights for Asians.

These new leaders, Kenyans for Kenya, will be nationalists who represent constituencies but also understand that if one group of Kenyans are left behind, the whole country lags.



What legacy are we leaving our children?

# Kenyans for Kenya

Building a Nation for All Kenyans

# Beyond Conflict To A Future for ALL

*"We must work from the basis that Kenya is a garment of many colours, which is beautiful because each colour is present. We cannot be one colour because we would be dull. Some colours cannot run over others because we would be ugly. We must all stay in place and be bright"*

Mayor of Garissa, 2010

## Introduction

This is an analysis of intra ethnic dialogue conducted through an initiative called Ethnicity Discussion Forums. This initiative was implemented, over the last two years, through partnerships between Kikuyus for Change and other grass-root-based community organizations like the Abagusii Community, Coast Citizens Coalition and the Kenya National Alliance, Rift Valley Youth Convention, Teso Progressive Forum, Maa Civil Society of Kenya and Pastoralists Development Network of Kenya, Northern Forum for Democracy, the East African Action Club, Western Leaders Forum and the Ukambani Progressive Forum.

In these intra ethnic discussions the participants answered the following questions: Who is a Luhya (Kamba, Teso etc. depending on the ethnic group in discussion), How does a Luhya relate with other communities? What does a typical Luhya think about being Kenyan? What does a Luhya expect in order to feel Kenyan? Additional information is drawn from various inter ethnic discussions conducted under the same initiative.

## My Tribe

Most ethnic groups tend to have a positive view of themselves and of the way they interact with neighbouring ethnic groups. **Kisii:** "We are hard working and entrepreneurial". **Kalenjin:**

*"You can tell a good Kalenjin by the nature of his cows". Teso: "We are generous". Kikuyu: "We are enterprising and hard working". Luhya: "Luhya are peaceful, law abiding and generous. We are welcoming of other communities and learn their languages". Asians: "We engaged in the anti-colonial struggle, joining hands with African nationalists". Maasai: "The Masae means Nation, whilst the Masai means tribe: so we are the first people to recognize the existence of a nation".*

## Ethnic Frustration, Anger, Hatred, Resentment and Despair

The amount and intensity of frustration, anger and hatred demonstrated at many of the intra ethnic meetings was almost overwhelming. However, this should not be surprising considering Kenya is only just emerging from violent conflict that the botched 2007 general election triggered. Emotions are still raw and these discussions illustrated that a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation process will be necessary to publicly and systematically record grievances and make recommendations for remedy.



Tunavumilia kuwa Wakenya! Cartoon by Madd



# Narratives of Grievances

## The Kikuyu as the 'Historical Injustice'

In all but one of the intra-ethnic meetings, the Kikuyus were mentioned as the group primarily responsible for the discontent among other Kenyans.

Kikuyus are perceived by other Kenyans as an arrogant economically dominant ethnic group that is also unscrupulous. The stereotype that Kikuyus are thieves has become entrenched across the country. Kikuyus are seen to have an economic advantage due to a head start beginning in colonial times, corruption and nepotistic tendencies of the Kenyatta and Kibaki regimes. There is a fear of Kikuyu political and economic hegemony particularly in the Rift Valley. In the Western Kenya meeting, one of the leaders swore that another Kikuyu could not be President.

There were dehumanising references to Kikuyus in language that usually precedes genocide. In one inter ethnic meeting, a participant from Western Kenya said that Kikuyu behaviour made others wonder if 'these [Kikuyus] are really people'. In the Maasai intra-ethnic meeting, an elder referred to Kikuyus as worse than an animal which though greedy does not eat its own children.

Kikuyus are generally individualistic and do not have cohesive group aspirations. Entrepreneurship and wealth generation have become the most dominant cultural trait among Kikuyus. Kikuyus have been taken by surprise at the recent intense hostilities towards them.

Although there is some acknowledgement of historical advantage, Kikuyus feel there is little recognition of Kikuyu disenfranchisement and displacement during the anti-colonial struggle. Many Kikuyus assume that these recent hostilities emanate from envious and uninformed instincts. Kikuyus feel unfairly punished for doing the same things that others are doing e.g. voting for their own kinsmen. Many also feel unfairly victimized for the actions of Kikuyu leaders.



Money, money, money.. said to be the Kikuyus' number one love.

## The Problem is also the Luos, the Kalenjins, the Asians, the Bukus, the Kipsigis etc.

In addition to the anti-Kikuyu sentiments, many ethnic groups have negative stereotypes and grievances against neighbouring groups. There are also significant grudges among sub tribes and clans within ethnic groups.

For example, the Maragolis rarely support the Bukus to attain national political leadership. A Pokot, in the Kalenjin meeting, claimed that Pokots had not benefited from belonging to the Kalenjin ethnic group. There are subtle rivalries between Kikuyus of Nyeri, Kiambu and Muranga. Kiambu Kikuyus claim that the political failures of the Kibaki government are associated with the academic and unnecessarily complicated approaches of Nyeri Kikuyus.

The Kisiis think the Luos are lazy and the Kalenjin/Kipsigis selfish. The Maasai believe that they are culturally the closest tribe to the Kikuyus but have been betrayed by the Kikuyus since independence. Meanwhile, the Asians feel systematically denied of their entitlements as Kenyans and have to grovel for their rights. Other Kenyans think that Asians are abusive and cruel employers. The indigenous people of the Coast feel everyone treats the Coast as 'Kenya' while holding onto their indigenous regions for their local people.

## The Government is the Problem

Ineffective government is a fundamental cause of deprivation and challenge for all Kenyans. However, only the Somali community framed their core grievances as being related to government.

The Somalis began their relationship with the independence Kenya government on a negative note that has since shaped their political identity. The shifta war to quell secessionist intentions left Somalis bitter and broken. Some feel that there is a deliberate policy to keep them poor and uneducated so as to manage them politically. They believe that their region continues to be systematically under developed as a buffer against hostilities from Kenya's northern neighbours. They wonder why successive governments have not secured the northern border instead.

They feel that Somali leaders in government are essentially co-opted and unable to fundamentally resolve problems for Somalis. Somalis generally distinguish governments from communities. The Moi government was not referred to as the Kalenjin government or the Kibaki government the Kikuyu government. This is because they have had members of their communities in government, without that presence leading to change in how their region is governed.

## Poverty and Inequality

The Coastians described Kenyans across ethnicities as belonging to three broad groups: *walala hoi*, *walala heri* and the *walala hai*. The *walala hoi* are the poor who are not guaranteed a meal a day. They were referred to as the 'consumables' of Kenyan society engaging in militias and manual work. The *walala heri* (*heri wao*) are the middleclass who have meet their basic needs but are struggling to meet their wants. The *walala hai* are the wealthy who meet their needs and wants – 'eating their own food and that of other people'. A Somali, in Garissa, however noted that wealthy Somalis get along well with other ethnic groups. Is this true of other wealthy Kenyans?

The need for equitable resource distribution was a dominant proposal raised in most meetings. At the Coast meeting, the story was given of 'a man', a father of six who divided the ugali in half keeping a half for himself and giving the other half to his wife and their six children. Over time, the discontented wife and children could no longer recognize him as husband and father. The wife and children ganged

up and 'sorted the man out'. In a related reference on inequality, the refrain of a popular Kikuyu song goes 'the cake should be returned back to the table'.

Resource inequalities at the Coast have created a strong demand for a Coastal regional government. It is strongly believed that a regional government would secure the interests of indigenous Coastal people for jobs, land and other resources. Some people at the Coast wish to secede from Kenya. In Central province and now Nairobi a militia Mungiki, nurtured by economic inequality, has developed into a national security crisis. Other regions of the country also have militia that is for hire for political and other agendas.

## Mutually Assured Destruction

Ethnic animosity and inequitable resource distribution among and within regions has created a deadly cocktail for conflict. The 2007/2008 crisis demonstrated that there can be no victors of a civil war in Kenya. First the Kikuyus got attacked for 'stealing an election' and for arrogantly dominating other communities. Kisiis also got into trouble for voting in the 'Kikuyu' government. Then a second wave of violence caught Kambas for 'joining Kikuyus' in government. Kikuyus hit back in self defense as well as in 'support of their suffering kinsmen' and other groups got caught up for various local reasons. The government ruthlessly defended the status quo beating back and killing those who demonstrated against the botched election.

Within a span of a few weeks it was clear that there were no winners. Property was looted, women of all ethnic groups raped, hundreds were dead and many maimed, food was abandoned on farms, schools were closed, fear ruled as further retaliation was anticipated, Kenya's neighbours became jittery as their supply lines were blocked, the country's image was battered and Kenya was almost consigned to a failed state. Later, most economic gains became losses and millions of Kenyans were faced with starvation. The national cake has become even smaller. The power sharing solution was a peace measure but is a divided, limping government that often threatens to collapse and throw the country back to bloody conflict.

As demonstrated here, many Kenyans are still licking their wounds and cursing their ethnic enemies. There are reports that various ethnic groups are arming - the country is still on a path of mutually assured destruction.

### Success Through Participation & Resources



Some members of the Project meet Kofi Annan

### Spectrum of Partners

- Regional grassroots organizations
- Local organized groups
- Private sector
- Civil society
- Media
- Artistes
- Government & Government Agencies
- International community/diplomats
- Religious sector

### THE "KENYANNESS" CHARACTER

*(A Place to Start?)*

- HUMANITY:** also compassion, sacrifice, kindness, goodness, selflessness)Indications that one views other people first & foremost as fellow human beings.
- COURAGE:** The strength of character to be different, to stand up for what one believes in, to dare to be different.
- INITIATIVE:** Resourcefulness in achieving that which will add value to the lives of others
- OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP:** The ability to step out from the crowd, to risk failure, to seek distinction
- PERSISTENCE:** Keeping at it until the work is done.

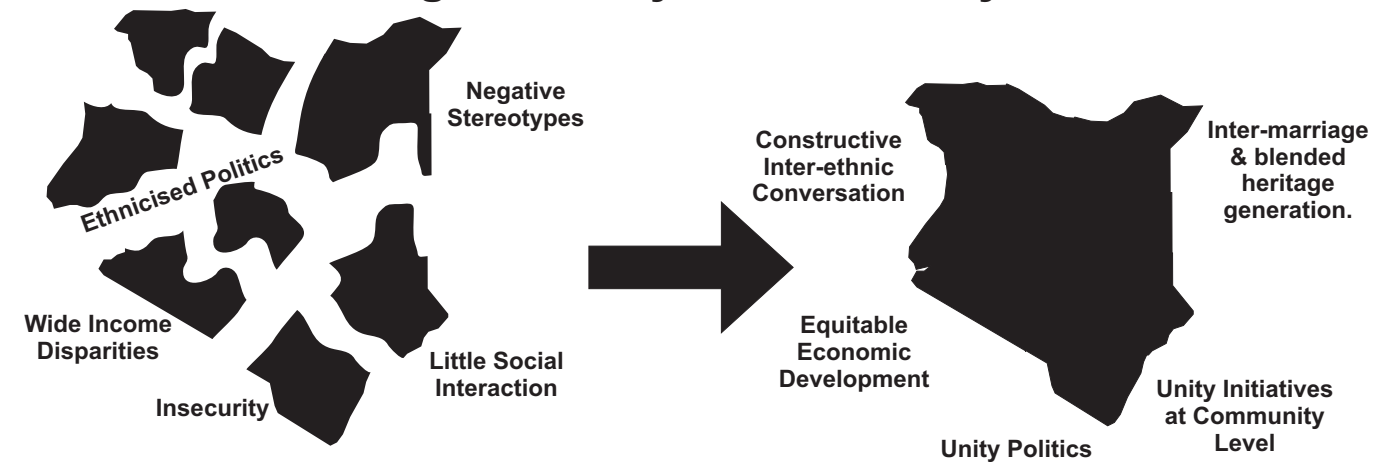
### Why look at "Kenyanness" during PEV?

- DOUBT:** PEV made us question our commitment to the Kenyan identity
- INCOMPLETE PEV PICTURE:** There has been an incomplete treatment of PEV with the tragic side predominating, yet there were many people who did the right thing. There has been little national effort to recognise these people who behaved as Kenyans
- DANGER OF NATIONAL RETROGRESSION:** We face the risk of sliding back into ethnic conclaves, which is making it difficult to solve national problems; community-based siege mentality is growing, whole communities are held responsible for actions of individuals; (Mau Forest, ICC Process, Mungiki, etc); Ethnicised politics still features strongly; Ethnic militia still exist.

### Project Messages & Expectations

- MAIN MESSAGES:**
  - Hope in ourselves and our ability to be a united country
  - Individual actions made the difference positively and negatively
  - Individuals must be held to account for their speech and actions
- EXPECTED IMPACT:**
  - Promote a Kenya First attitude
  - Accelerate the Kenya superseding tribe process
  - Revive hope in the notion of Kenya
  - Open a platform for constructive inter-ethnic engagement

### Moving to a Kenya First Identity



### Project Outcome

- CONVERSATION:** Increasing open, constructive intra- and inter-ethnic conversations
- APPRECIATION:** Raise appreciation of the need to be Kenyan and the courage to act Kenyan First
- REVELATION:** Unmask the strategy of those who hide behind tribe in order to do wrong