

# Media and Peacebuilding: analysis of print media reporting on peace initiatives of the 2007/2008 conflict in Kenya

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## **Abstract:**

Media in any given society occupy a unique position owing to its power to the audience consciousness and its ability to bring to public attention issues that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. It is capable of shaping the people's perceptions and agendas through presenting an opportunity to communicate to either a large number of people or target a particular group of people. On December 30, 2007, when ECK declared President Mwai Kibaki the winner of a hotly contested presidential election Kenya witnessed an unprecedented degree of post election violence and stared on the brink of a disastrous disintegration. The high magnitude of the violence put Kenyan media under intense scrutiny with questions being asked about the role the media played during the period. It is in this background this study was designed to establish the role the mainstream print media had in peace building initiatives during the PEV period. In particular determine the extent to which the media covered the initiatives, how they framed and primed them and also established whether they were covered in a particular trend during the period. To achieve these objectives the study employed a content analysis research design that permitted the researcher to systematically analyze data obtained from archival records and documents, in this case from the two leading newspapers, the Daily Nation and The Standard for the period, from December 1 st, 2007 to March 31 st 2008, that were purposively sampled. From the findings the media not only covered stories that were dedicated to peace building issues but also allocated space to other initiatives that supported the same such as advertisements and letters to the editor that gave organizations and general publics' an avenue to air their views. However despite such positive move to inform the Kenyans the media overemphasized on news items. Among the news that was given more emphasis was the peace talks initiated after the violence broke. The print media also disregarded the importance to have the same coverage before and after the skirmishes. Further the media devoted less attention to detailed write-ups on peace issues hence failing to effectively informing the Kenyans of other underlying issues to the skirmishes. The media also did not forewarn the members of the public of any impending violence prior to the disputed presidential election. The study therefore recommended for more attention to be accorded to investigative journalism in order to carry out detailed articles on issues rather than over relying on covering events as they unfold. This demands a further training of journalists in the field. Also since the study only concentrated to print media, there is need to carry same research on the electronic media in Kenya.