Towards an understanding of conflicts and peace building initiatives in Kibera Urban slum-Nairobi, 1991-2012

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Abstract:

The focus of the Research was an attempt towards an understanding of Conflicts and Peace building Initiatives in Kibera informal settlement, Nairobi; 1991-2012. The study began with an examination of the history of the Kibera conflicts since the slum emerged in 1904 after the Nubians (Sudanese ex-soldiers serving the British crown) first settled in the area. The research further examined and analysed the relationships of the multi-ethnic communities living in Kibera during the period and how the re-introduction of Multipartyism in 1991 impacted on those relations. Using both secondary and primary sources of data, a number of defining factors in Kibera ranging from Socio-economic to Political were analysed in an effort to understand why conflicts escalated in Kibera after 1991 and majorly around or during election periods. One of the salient findings was that Kibera had been a precarious settlement since colonialism and its volatility in post independence Kenya was a perpetuation of what the colonialists established. Furthermore, conflicts in Kibera defied the drama of monocausal explanation. The prebendary brand of Politics dominant in Kibera served to entrench poverty while enriching a select few. From the historical and archival information, land has been under contestation in both colonial and post colonial periods not only in Kibera but in Kenya as a whole. Lack of political will within successive governments to address the land question was a key factor emphasized in the report. There was also focus on the Structural Conflict and Sustainable development Theories as the prism for understanding the causes of Conflicts and interpretation of how such conflicts could be avoided in Kibera in the future and in a long lasting manners. The study established that although various Peace building efforts by different actors existed in the slum, there was first the need for all the actors to understand the complex state of conflicts and how they impacted on the local residents. The knowledge would assist them in addressing the problem in a more realistic and practical manner. The politicization of the land question in Kibera was largely to blame for most of the conflicts in the slum. The running theme was therefore that; as long as the land and the high poverty level issues remained unresolved in Kibera slum, it would be hard to contain the persistent tensions in the informal settlement. While Peace building Initiatives by various actors to some extent played significant role towards return to peace in Kibera, the Government held the key to Stability, Peace, and development through investment of massive resources and provision of essential government sponsored services.