

## **Introduction to the Case Studies**

The case studies included in Chapters Three through Seven are organized according to geography. They profile organizations working on demand-based solutions to small arms proliferation, and quote local peace workers in response to current gun policies and policy-level understandings of peace and conflict. In the conclusion, there is a discussion of the primary underlying factors driving demand that emerged in this research, across geographical regions and the urban-rural divide.

## CHAPTER THREE

# NAIROBI

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### **Nairobi and Environs**

Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, is located in the central-southern part of the country. Built on what used to be a swampy watering hole for the Maasai, it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it began its life as a stopping-over point on the British railway between Mombasa and Uganda. By 1900 it had become a town with real buildings instead of only tents, and now it is the biggest city between Cairo and Johannesburg. With a population of around 2 million, it is also home to some of Africa's most overcrowded and filthy urban slums. Many areas around the capital house urban poor, but Nairobi also hosts international markets at the crossroads of cultures. Cheap goods from Dubai via Somalia, livestock from Northeastern Kenya, and affordable international call rates characterize commerce. In both low- and middle-income areas, gang affiliation and ethnic differences sow division and enforce conflict zones.

A few kilometres from the four- and five-star hotels of the central business district, living conditions verge on the inhumane. No sewage facilities combined with a high water index mean that raw waste flows in and around dwellings and openly through streets and paths where pedestrians walk and children play. The problems associated with urban slums all over the world apply to those around Nairobi, including Mathare, Korogocho, Kibera, Kasarani, and Starehe. Population density is extremely high, but impossible to measure with any accuracy because most residents are squatters living in makeshift shacks or in buildings owned by absentee landlords that are verging on collapse. However, estimates place the population living in slums as 60 per cent of the Nairobi total, occupying only 5.8 per cent of all land used for residential purposes. Some areas have been placed at 63,000 people per square kilometre population density.<sup>1</sup>

Compounding the problems of resource development and service delivery is the fact that most slums are located on state-owned land with only temporary and sometimes illegal lease agreements. The occupants of the land are provided with Temporary Occupation Licenses by the provincial administration,

and the structures are not recognized by Kenya's legal and official policies. Because they may be demolished at any time by the city council and because there is no possibility for legal land ownership with its attendant rights, structures in the slums (even multi-storey buildings made of brick and mortar) are constructed in the cheapest way possible without conforming to the official minimum housing standards. Tenants usually enter into informal agreements on a room-by-room basis, with an average of five people inhabiting a single room.<sup>2</sup> Landlords seek to maximize their profits in the shortest possible time frame, constructing as many rooms as possible regardless of the effect on sanitation or the environment.

Even in the 'nicer' areas outside of the CBD, markets for drugs and guns thrive along with markets for livestock and other commodities from north and east of the city. Peter Little describes Eastleigh, located east of the city on the way to Kasarani and Starehe, as a kind of cosmopolitan merging of legal and illegal markets, borderlands and mainstream:

"One needs only to visit Eastleigh, Nairobi to see how the formal (legal) and informal (illegal) merge in complex ways. The shopping area itself, which is widely noted to have the busiest commercial avenue in Nairobi, attracts middle- and upper-class shoppers from around the city and other parts of the country. They come to shop for bargains and, in some cases, to purchase counterfeit identification cards and the like. Up-scale brands of fashion, electronics, and other consumer items can be purchased at 20 to 30 per cent below price elsewhere in town and services, such as internet and phone, can be obtained at a fraction of normal costs... Similar to the cross-border commerce in northern Kenya, the prevalence of illegal trade and its tight integration into daily practice serves to legitimize it. Little official effort is made to halt it, in part because many officials who are supposed to control illegal commerce receive 'rents' (bribes) from it. There is an ill-defined, baffling sense about Eastleigh that inhibits categorization, but nonetheless captures the essence of the new kind of commerce."<sup>3</sup>

Guns, too, thrive in the Eastleigh market, as described below by peace builders living and working in the area.

Rent conflicts are the most protracted and violent in the slums. Disputes around matters of slum tenancy have almost no reference in national law. There is no protection for tenants, who are subject both to the whims of landlords and the unpredictability of market forces. Conflicts in Kibera,

Kawangware, Korogocho, and Mathare in particular have been documented by the group PeaceNet, which characterizes them as follows:

“[Slum dwellers] do not identify conditions of deprivation that subject them to such kind of a livelihood. Instead, they turn against each other, coalescing around various identities as either tenants or landlords, where housing conflicts are concerned or along ethnic lines, when perceived ‘ethnic interests’ are at stake, or along gang lines, among other identities.”<sup>4</sup>

In the first quarter of 2003, Mathare Valley slums experienced violent confrontations over rent disputes. Petrol bombs were used by gang members and hundreds of shacks burned down, leaving thousands homeless. According to one report, raiders reportedly threw stones on the iron sheet roofs of shacks, then hid in wait for those who came out to investigate. They beat their victims, securing some of the shacks from the outside and setting them on fire. Police called in to control the violence were attacked and their vehicles hit with stones and petrol bombs.<sup>5</sup>

Informal economies thrive, as gangs and power brokers fight for control over resources (such as territory) and markets (such as drug monopolies). Even in the context of rent violence, gangs compete to collect rent from heavily populated areas, and then keep the income instead of passing it on to landlords as promised. This leads to landlords hiring gang members and outside groups to collect rent, creating a cycle of violence but a lucrative market for those with guns to use or hire.

## **Nairobi Youth Network for Peace (NYNP)**

The Nairobi Youth Network for Peace (NYNP) was started in February 2002 when a group of young people from Nairobi met for a conference in Limuru to share and exchange ideas and experiences on pressing issues behind conflicts and insecurity in Nairobi. Before the Limuru Workshop, there had been consultative meetings with PeaceNet (a Kenyan NGO), Oxfam GB, and NCKK, all financial contributors to the Network, on how to expand peace activities for youth. Oxfam had previously sponsored the Kibera Youth Programme for Peace and Development (KYPPEDE) and wanted to work in other areas.

Both the young people and donors agreed that youth are both perpetrators and victims of the rampant insecurity and violence in the slums, and the young

people noted that they had been sidelined in peace building and conflict management despite being blamed for high levels of crime. They workshop resolved that if the youth can be aggressors, they could also be peace agents, giving birth to the NYNP.<sup>6</sup> The Network is a forum made up of group membership from eight geopolitical regions of Nairobi. General members elect regional representatives that form a Steering Committee entrusted with coordinating the implementation of joint projects. The Steering Committee operates as the secretariat. Regional focal points include the Centre for Youth in Sustainable Development, Westlands; Kasarani Starehe Youth, Kasarani and Starehe; Kibera Youth Programme for Peace and Development, Lang'ata; St. Joseph Church, Kamukunji; Soweto Urban Development Association, Embakasi; Chellepe Theatre Group, Makadara; and Guadalupe Youth, Dagoretti.

The NYNP vision reads: "In trying to inculcate a culture of peace and non-violence among the inhabitants of Nairobi, NYNP envisions a peaceful and safer city for all people irrespective of ethnic, gender, and racial or economic affiliation." The organization's broad objectives are:

- To promote participation of youth in peace-building and decision making
- To establish structures to respond to and manage disasters
- To research, document, and disseminate positive information among the youth
- To promote capacity building in the field of peace building, active non-violence, networking and communication
- To create awareness and education, lobbying and advocacy (on peace, human rights, and development issues).

In 2003 the Network has grown to over 40 member groups. It has been successful as a forum bringing together different youth groups and institutions with a focus on organizations dealing with development, human rights, and peace issues. It has also fulfilled a crucial role as a research and documentation vehicle, in particular with the launch of a report in July 2002 on violence in Kibera during December 2001. The report, entitled "Quest for Human Dignity: Kibera Violence" enlisted members of KYPPEDE and PeaceNet to conduct interviews monitoring community violence with landlords, tenants, 'opinion shapers,' political party leaders, and speakers at the tenants' gatherings in the slums. The report gave voice to Kibera residents outside of mainstream media coverage.

## **“An Idle Mind is the Devil’s Workshop”: Youth and Guns in the Nairobi Slums**

### ***Interview with youth from slums east of Nairobi***

Here in Kenya, for some time while we were still in school, that is the late 80’s and early 90’s, the youth were not much involved in crimes. It was the older middle-aged men. But from 1991 to 1992 there was no employment and most of us were learned university leavers, form four leavers and a few form three dropouts. After some had gone to university, finished form four, some had even gone to colleges, we got into the job market but there were no jobs. Our parents feel that after education they should do away with us because we are adults and should fend for ourselves.

You want to wear shoes, nice clothes, if a boy has a girlfriend he wants to entertain her, he wants to go to discos, but what can he do when there is no job? These youths have known one another since childhood, they live in the same neighbourhood, have been friends for a long time and you know an empty mind is the devil’s workshop. So they see this man who has been parking here two or three times and works with Kenya Airways and they know Kenya Airways employees have money. They organize the next month end. They lock him up and rob him. After they succeed in two or three attacks, they feel that this is their job. So they organize a gang. Then in 1991-1992 the guns came in. They felt that robbing or car jacking these days means you have to have a gun and they started buying.

The other problem is corruption in the government. Most of the industries where the young people could have gone to do casual jobs were closed down and there was nowhere to look for work. Other parastatals were closing down too. If you look at our magazines they advertise for jobs but will want five years experience and you are just fresh from university. Where will you get that experience? These are the challenges hitting our youth.

Another thing is the video halls everywhere and they show a lot of American movies with organized gangs. So after watching, the youth go to practice it then do it live and succeed and are considered heroes. Gangs do it the way they see it in the movies. They have even opened these shows for kids. These are contributing a lot to crime among the youth because

one can afford five shillings, they go and watch these movies and instructional videos it is like a training session. Even the police know, when they want to catch thugs they just raid a video hall and will get at least one to five thugs. Why? Because these people will rob at night, sleep up to eleven o'clock, have lunch then go to the video halls for two hours, then at around 5 or 6 o'clock, they go to hijack cars just like they see in the videos.

Mainly it is economics and it is also a kind of fashion, or if you want to be considered as tough. So it is an urban culture thing in a sense. If your gang is to be recognized as the best, they call them 'oteros', they must have guns and the more sophisticated guns you have the greater the respect.

## **Kasarani Starehe Youth (KASTA)**

A member group of the Nairobi Youth Network for Peace, KASTA itself is comprised of smaller member groups located throughout the two neighbouring constituencies of Kasarani and Starehe. KASTA was started in 1989 after a workshop following violence between the two places, which are separated by a road. The road had become a dumping place, with each side blaming the other for the environmental damage. People in the market complained to the city council that the garbage was emitting bad odour and bringing flies. The city council stopped everybody from dumping there, which left both sides without a place to dispose of trash. Violent fights began erupting among the youth, with an increase in the number of the weapons in the area as gang members and others bought, rented, or stole guns to engage in the conflict. After another clash, this time between residents and the city council, KASTA was formed to give youth from both places a forum to reconcile differences and engage in joint projects.

The group's objectives are to:

- Unite the youth and try to change the image of the youth within Kasarani and Starehe
- Create income-generating activities to sustain the youth in their needs and rehabilitate them.
- Request groups that do training to come and train our members, and teach our members to train each other

## **Understanding the gun problem, in their own words**

### ***Interview with youth peace workers***

**Question:** Is there a problem of guns in this area?

**Answer:** There are a lot of problems of guns, which have caused a lot of insecurity, a lot of deaths and a lot of destruction.

**Question:** Can you describe the problem?

**Answer:** In our locality we have this market down here where they bring goats and sheep that are transferred from Isiolo and Mandera along the borderline. When they arrive in the morning and they start offloading, you will see one that looks like it is dead. All of a sudden people just come and grab it and run with it. After some investigation you will learn that it was slaughtered and stuffed with guns inside and then sewn back. This is the method they use to transport guns. Secondly, the way they transport bullets. Mandera and Isiolo are very dry. They use lorries to transport water from the water points to those sides. When coming back, half the jerry cans will be full of bullets and the other half will be full of water. So if the police check, they will find the jerry cans with water and let them through and the bullets will be transported all the way to here. When they get here they are sold cheaply. The black market name for the bullets is 'mawe' (stones) or 'mbegu' (seeds). Even guns sometimes are sold from 1,000 to 1,500 Kenya shillings and that is a deal.

**Question:** What kind of guns are they?

**Answer:** There are AK-47s, G3s, etc.

**Question:** They are sold for 1,500 shillings [around US\$20]?

**Answer:** That is why they are using them to rob small things like mobile phones or small businesses like retail shops.

**Question:** So they are cheap and readily available and make the crime problem worse?

**Answer:** Yes. Yesterday our two friends left K1 to go home. Immediately they boarded a 'matatu' (taxi) and they were robbed at gunpoint at

2 o'clock during daytime. Also, thugs come in groups of 20 to plots (flats). Fifteen of them will have guns, and they will rob the whole plot. Even if you are 100 residents you cannot defeat them because they have all sorts of guns big and small, and they also wear bullet proof [vests]. If you make a small mistake, they do not hesitate to finish you off.

The other problem is the police. If you inform the police about a person in possession of a gun, he will go and get a bribe. For instance if Florence is my friend and I know she has a gun, and CJ is a policeman. If I tell him that she has a gun, he will go to her, and because she has money, she will bribe him and [he will] tell her who reported her and so she comes back to you for revenge. There is no security of information. Instead of people who have guns being arrested, they bribe their way out and come for revenge. You may know that your neighbour has a gun and that it will kill your brother somewhere else, but you can do nothing about it.

**Question:** How many people do you think own guns in the community if you had to guess?

**Answer:** Let's say three-quarters. Twenty out of 100 people [sic] have guns because any organized gang group or thugs would have at least one or two guns.

**Question:** So the people owning or using guns are mostly gangs? Are there people who are not criminals or won't commit criminal acts that own them for security?

**Answer:** There are those who are licensed. The big traders nowadays may apply for guns due to this insecurity. But these are legal guns. But the problem is a businessman may have that gun and his may not be a clean business so he could be lending out his gun to be used somewhere else. There is also the issue of the criminals who have these guns and the police who too have guns. The police may have them for security, but after some violence has taken place you find that it is the policeman who was in possession of the gun, he is one of the thugs. You can imagine that this policeman may be involved in illegal guns supply or use of guns in an illegal manner. There are three categories of people who have guns and also reservists.

**Question:** Do you have reservists here?

**Answer:** Yes, very many of them...

**Question:** You work with the youth. Are they a kind of a target group for using guns?

**Answer:** Very much. Like those ones who shot [our friend's] brother, we were being told that they were so young one could not imagine them with guns. They were between 15 and 18 years of age.

**Question:** Do they own them or are they given [guns] to use?

**Answer:** There are two types of ownership, I own a gun so I lend it out, and there are those who form or organize themselves as a gang, and they contribute money and buy guns as their tool of work. It is like the way we would organize and buy a computer. That is how they work.

**Question:** So for the most part the youth with a gun probably does not own it legally himself but as part of a gang or group.

**Answer:** Yes. They work in groups of five or ten in a gang. They are very well organized and they commit crimes as a general way of making money. Just to mention, the most lucrative gun business is car jacking. I believe it was most of these young people we talk to and they even share with us what they have done. Young people do most of the car jacking in Nairobi from these slums, especially Kasarani and Starehe. They car jack [then] go around in the vehicle committing crimes. After harassing people and robbing them, they dump the vehicle somewhere and disappear.

### ***The Effectiveness of Demand Reduction Efforts***

Both the KASTA and the NYNP staff feel they are making significant strides in reducing the demand for small arms in Nairobi. A group of young men, when asked why they engage in peace building activities and even garbage collection rather than joining a gang where they would have money and status answered that in return for their choices, they feel safer. They said, "We all know many people who have died from these things [guns]. We support each other to stay together and stay safe." Some neighbourhoods in Kasarani and Starehe have markedly changed in the past five years because of the efforts of some young men to interrupt the cycle of violence and create a new culture of work rather than violence.

## **Peace and Demand**

### ***Youth worker from Kasarani***

In peace building we ask when do we have peace? Is peace only the absence of war? Peace is very broad. When I am hungry, I am not at peace with myself. When I don't have shelter I am not at peace with myself. When there is insecurity outside even when I have a shelter and I am scared someone might come to kill me I am not at peace with myself. With peace building, everything is about peace and acting on violence. After looking for alternatives we must harmonize.

How do we harmonize our members? Maybe we are in a group and I am working but they are not. So I am living better than they, will they have peace with me? No they will come and drop me (attack). In case of coming together we should do something which will bring peace. Maybe we can get something to eat, like most of the people in this group are single men, so they can come together and share a little money and pay for a small room and at least have a decent place to live.

From these activities we are trying to cater for our members' needs from special needs, to psychological needs and even environmental needs because if the environment is clean we have peace with ourselves. Before we started rubbish collection if you can remember, every now and then in our area we would find aborted children dumped everywhere. Here you are caring about humanity and you see a child who has been thrown away because there is a lot of garbage heaps. Imagine a dog just rotting outside your door? After we cleared these garbage heaps we do not even find a dog that has been thrown away in our neighbourhood. At least we have catered for peace within our environment.

What I would say about government policies in Kenya is that most of them are made in high hotels, even policies that concern the youth, but the youth on the ground are not involved. They believe that guns are found in the slums and yes, they are, and most of the slum boys and girls are using them but they do not involve the youth in the slums when making those policies. How do you eradicate something without going to its source? They go and sit in those high hotels and invitations are sent to those in high places only they don't involve people at the grass root level and pass these policies. They have a policy about guns but they do not share it with the

'wananchi' (citizens). These policies are ineffective because they do not involve people at the grass root level.

Because of our misinformed public the reception of such policies becomes negative. Even if the policy is well intentioned they will not to make use of it. They are telling us in the media to give information to the police if we have any. The police come and ambush and start actually swooping on people and people take this as harassment. In the real sense the police are doing the correct thing. That is why we are saying that before any policies are initiated, the stakeholders should be involved first in making decisions. In a way we are saying that they use a lot of money to put in defence clearing these things, proliferation and other things, for instance these small arms campaigns. You just see in TV if you are fortunate enough to have one but they don't involve the people on the ground. If they can come to the people on the ground, talk to them, call 'barazas' (public meetings), prepare charts and put them up everywhere. Even those who don't know how to read will ask those they are with who know to read to share the information. Also, if there was trust between the police and the public, this gun issue would be eliminated once and for all.

## Notes

1. Tenancy and Sanitation Provision in Informal Settlements in Nairobi: Revisiting the Public Latrine Option. *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 9, no. 2 Oct. 1997
2. Ibid.
3. Little, p166.
4. PeaceNet, *Quarterly Peace Monitor* vol. 3 no. 1 2003 p 50.
5. Ibid.
6. Workshop minutes in *Youth Peace Talk* newsletter, vol. 1 no. 1