



## GOVERNANCE SECTOR SUCCESS STORIES



Mombasa Youth at a workshop aimed at promoting dialogue. Photo: The New Dawn

## SOLVING CONFLICTS THROUGH MEDIATION

In early 2007, Orma herdsmen from Tana River crossed into farmlands belonging to Mijikenda from Magharini in Malindi District in search of water and pasture for their cattle. Before long, tensions arose between members of the two communities over the ownership and use of the farmlands. What had initially been a conflict over natural resources soon acquired a religious character - pitting the Muslim Orma against the Christian Mijikenda.

At the invitation of the Provincial Administration, a team from the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) made up of Christians and Muslims, was dispatched to Magharini to mediate between the two communities. After four days of dialogue an agreement was finally reached, granting temporary grazing and watering rights to the Orma. As a result, the tension subsided and the two border communities resumed their previous state of peaceful coexistence.

## ENTRY POINTS TO COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT

The success of this intervention between two different communities is partly attributed to CICC's insistence on dialogue and consensus building to resolve conflict situations. Negotiators from the two communities were also drawn to the neutrality of CICC's interfaith team, and in particular, the collaboration among them, which sent out an important message of tolerance. The intervention also benefited from CICC's cooperation with the Provincial Administration, which acknowledges that CICC clerics are important entry points for its officials to gain access to communities in conflict.

In November 2009 Christians and Muslims in Garissa town were on the verge of fighting after Muslim youth destroyed a church

adjacent to their mosque complaining that it played loud music, disrupting their religious activities. Taking the initiative, CICC dispatched an interfaith team made up of an imam and a priest to help restore calm and to reconcile the two groups.

Working alongside the Provincial Administration, the interfaith team mediated between the groups, eventually resulting in a recognition by both sides that they need to live together peacefully and harmoniously. The dialogue also established that an underlying issue to the conflict was the fact that a number of church buildings in the town, unlike mosques, had title deeds. In response, the Provincial Administration took steps to assist some mosques to acquire titles for their buildings.

## PEACE THROUGH CONSENSUS

In 2008, the organization, Muslims for Human Rights, initiated a system of security forums known as *Bunge Za Usalama* (*Assemblies for Security*) that has become a model for community deliberation on issues of peace and security.

The *Bunges*, two of which are convened once a month in each of the Coast region's 21 constituencies, have enabled communities to build consensus on how to address local security concerns and develop community security action plans. They play an important role in facilitating democratic participation in local security planning through the election of individuals tasked to follow up different aspects of action plans.

Some of the *Bunges* have turned into fully fledged neighbourhood watches liaising with local police and provincial administrators. Others, such as the Taita Taveta-based Mwatate Bura Human-Wildlife Resolution Committee, have evolved to address specific issues such as human-wildlife conflict.

*Bunges* increase their effectiveness by reaching out to specific stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, to come and share their expertise and suggestions. In addition, ad hoc *Bunges* may be constituted to address specific peace and security issues.



Interfaith dialogue Mombasa. Photo: Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC)