

The Role of Vernacular Radio Stations in Peace Building and Post-conflict Reconstruction Initiatives in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Ten years ago, Kenya experienced the worst post-election violence in the country after the disputed elections of 2007. Over 1000 people lost their lives and over half a million others were declared internally displaced. The violence, as was the case in previous elections was fundamentally occasioned by the fact that Kenyans tend to vote along ethnic lines. What was significant about the 2007 post-election violence was that vernacular radio stations were said to have played a significant role in propagating the violence by promoting the use of hate speech against other communities. This study examines the contribution of vernacular radio stations towards peace-building and reconstruction efforts in Kenya since the post-election violence of 2007. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: What kind of media messages do vernacular radio stations broadcast during the election period to promote peace? In what context do vernacular radio stations refer to other communities during the election period? The study will use the Framing theory to explain how a particular radio station tries to persuade its audience to embrace peace through its media messages. The study focuses on how a particular vernacular radio station has restructured their programming in an effort towards promoting peace and reconciliation among members of a community with other communities, and especially in preparation for the just concluded 2017 election period. This study recognizes the important role that vernacular languages play in promoting peace in post-conflict situations and in discouraging negative ethnicity and hate speech. The data will be collected through content analysis of specific radio programmes whose aim is to promote peace and reconstruction, as well as through interviews with radio presenters and producers of the radio station.

Keywords: Vernacular Radio, Peace Building, Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Post-Election Violence, Kenya