

Press release

Philanthropic responses to Kenyan election strife

Philadelphia, Pa., March 12, 2008 – Although Kenya’s two main political parties have signed a power-sharing agreement to help end violence that killed about 1,500 people since December’s presidential election, the task of reconciliation and resettling hundreds of thousands of people who fled the conflict is only just beginning.

U.N. agencies and international nongovernmental organizations are currently shifting their focus from emergency assistance and protection to recovery efforts. The organizations are conducting needs assessments and the United Nations is finalizing a plan to identify lasting solutions. These assessments will guide aid agencies in relocating, resettling and reintegrating internally displaced people who are currently living in about 200 camps.

Geneva Global is advising philanthropic donors who seek lasting peace in Kenya to support grass-roots, multi-ethnic organizations that are promoting peace-building efforts such as livelihood assistance and reconciliation programs. Kenyan community-based organizations that reflect a cross-section of Kenyan ethnicities offer the greatest opportunities for philanthropic investment in humanitarian and conflict recovery programs.

Underscoring the importance of investing in grass-roots efforts at reconciliation and recovery, Jesse Njoroge, coordinator of a camp in Nakuru, Kenya, told the U.N. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) last month that “the [power-sharing] announcement has had no major effect here. ... The IDPs [internally displaced people] feel that an agreement at the national level does not guarantee their safety and security at the grass-roots level – these agreements don’t always trickle down.”

National efforts to overcome mistrust and resentment are continuing, with political negotiations focusing on issues that many analysts have identified as the underlying causes of social tensions, such as:

- Poverty
- Inequitable distribution of resources
- Political and social exclusion
- Long-standing injustices surrounding land ownership

While it is encouraging that the United Nations and other organizations are applying their resources and expertise to early recovery efforts, and that high-level political and policy discussions are addressing historical grievances, the success of reconciliation efforts will be largely determined at the grass-roots level. Kenyan community-based organizations have a critical role to play in rebuilding a tolerant, pluralistic society.

Restoring the livelihoods of individuals and families whose businesses, homes, and assets were destroyed by rioting and looting is essential to meaningful, lasting reconciliation. As Njoroge told IRIN, "what is important is not co-existence of leaders, but co-existence of Kenyans."

Discerning philanthropic donors should support the efforts of organizations that are best-positioned to contribute to Kenya's recovery and future: community-based Kenyan agencies that are sensitive to the needs of families and individuals affected by the violence.

About Geneva Global

Geneva Global Inc. is a philanthropic advisory firm headquartered in suburban Philadelphia, Pa. Founded in 1999, Geneva Global provides independent research, advice and grant management to philanthropic investors. Through advisory services and research teams around the world, we assist clients in cutting through the complexities of international giving to connect the best community-owned solutions to humanitarian needs. We provide world-class philanthropic advisory services, helping each client make effective and exciting investments for lasting change in the world's hardest places. We have managed more than \$60 million in philanthropic investments, placing clients' funds into more than 1,400 projects in 110 developing nations and bringing measurable Life Change to more than 5.8 million people.

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