



SUCCESS STORY

Peace Committee Sparks Interest in Reconciliation



Peace Committee members march at the launch ceremony in Nakuru.

“We have gone to the district’s hot spots preaching peace to the youths and telling them to avoid drugs, senseless destruction of property and to cease being instruments of some leaders who are out to incite others to satisfy their personal interests and wicked causes.”

—Pastor George Mwangi

April 2009 – The Nakuru District Peace Committee (DPC), which is tasked with coordinating conflict prevention and peace-building activities in the district, received a seal of approval from former president Daniel arap Moi and other leaders at a recent public ceremony.

Responding to the December 2007 post-election violence, President Mwai Kibaki mandated that DPCs be formed throughout Kenya. However, Nairobi has provided little technical guidance and most districts have struggled to design and institute functional committees, as they lack operational capacity. Nevertheless, officials in Nakuru pushed forward with efforts to establish a DPC.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Provincial Commissioner noted that Nakuru’s DPC was the best that had been established thus far in the Rift Valley, a region that includes Nakuru and was widely affected by the conflict and continues to be a major resettlement area for people displaced by the violence.

Other speakers said that DPCs offer the best hope for dealing with conflict in Kenya, lauding the process that established the committee and holding it up as a model to be replicated in other districts. Former president Moi used the occasion to urge members of the Coalition Government to provide a better example for their constituents.

The event marked the culmination of two grants from USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI): one that provided assistance to establish the Nakuru DPC and a second that provided operations and communications support to the committee, which will serve as the secretariat for all the DPCs. In addition, OTI will be assisting the committee with its community mobilization activities, including efforts to nominate and train committee members, develop action plans, and stage district-wide *barazas* (public meetings) to raise awareness about the committees and their mission.

The launch of the Nakuru DPC has generated momentum for conflict prevention activities, sparking interest in peace committees in other areas, and has kindled complementary peace-building campaigns, including an effort by Pastor George Mwangi and Sangala ole Nasieku to reach out with messages of reconciliation to some of the most belligerent and estranged groups in the region.