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Resilience Praxis: Lessons and Experiences from Resilience Based Peacebuilding in Urban Informal Settlements in Nairobi

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Abstract

The growing variety and complexity of national-scale problems necessitates a combination of interdisciplinary methods and increasingly advanced modeling techniques for studying concerns and forecasting potential challenges and their solutions. This article focuses on the Life and Peace Institute's (LPI) work in four urban settlements in Nairobi, Kenya (Eastleigh, Kibera, Majengo and Mathare), which contributes to building sustainable peace through reinforcing community resilience to divisions and strengthening relations between social groups. Inspired by the need to find a lasting solution to conflict, LPI inquires how urban informal settlements can be resilient in the face of conflict, and at the same time serve as a building block for peace. Using a resilience lens to conflict transformation, this article discusses what resilience looks like to inhabitants of informal settlements in which insecurity, criminality and violence are common, and take place in unpredictable ways. These areas are densely populated, and comparatively underdeveloped. Despite these challenges, they are also sites of strong community cohesion and areas of exhibiting social change, and hubs of innovation in which local, informal civil society groups have thrived, in some cases taking on service provision and security roles where the government has often been perceived as largely invisible and absent. Therefore, addressing how the community in informal settlements exercises resilience, the article uses background information from LPI's piloting programme and toolkit on resilience in informal settlements to provide examples, seeking to develop and test new models for analysing resilience through the lens of violent conflict risks and responses. It concludes that, if suitable mechanisms were utilized, community resilience could be significantly and appreciably strengthened enabling the transmittance of knowledge as a driver of collaborative networks and relationships that form a resilient web and bridge the divide between urban informal settlement communities and government and non-governmental institutions leading in sum to transformative peacebuilding.

Key words: Kenya, Informal Settlements, Peacebuilding, Resilience

Introduction

Resilience has been an eye opener to me. It has made me more self-aware. It is the adversity quotient that gives me strength to pull through, to be aware of my surrounding and assist other in the challenges they are facing. Fred Ochieng, Resilience facilitator Eastleigh

Currently, over 1 billion urban residents reside in informal settlements made up of subpar homes or shacks.¹ Informal settlements are exempt from formal land ownership, land use, and zoning laws and regulations. Unanimity on a clear definition is impossible due to the variability of informal settlements.² The phrase "informal settlement" often refers to urban settlements that grow outside of the legal institutions intended to record land ownership and tenure and enforce compliance with legislation relating to planning and land use, built structures, public health and safety.³

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's definition includes "places where clusters of housing units have been created on property that the residents have no legal claim to or occupy illegally"⁴ and "unplanned settlements"⁵ and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulations (unauthorized housing). 'Governmental organizations are unable or unwilling to cooperate with them due to their illegality. These are settlements where city governments have not provided resilience-related infrastructure (paved roads, storm and surface drainage, piped water, etc.) and services (including healthcare, emergency services, and rules of law), as defined by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Many are in risky locations because their occupants stand a better chance of avoiding eviction.

The majority of the increase in urban population around the world will be accommodated in informal settlements in the absence of more effective policies. There is an urgent need to enhance resilience in these settlements, and to do so at scale, given the expected rates and regions of urban population expansion by 2050.

¹ Okyere et al., 2022; The global steering group for impact investment. (2022, may). Informal settlements: no longer invisible, the role of impact in scaling capital mobilisation to fund slum-upgrading programmes globally 2022; Powers & Faden, Structural injustice: Power, advantage, and human rights 2019, p.220; Abounnaga et al., 2021

² Matamanda et al., 2021, p.289 ; Cirolia & Drimie, 2017 p. 467 ; Kayizzi-Mugerwa et al., 2016

³ (Cirolia et al., 2017, p. 467); (Dupont et al., 2017, p.18)

⁴ OECD, 2001, available at: <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1351> accessed on 01/09/2022

⁵ ibid

54.7% of Kenya's population resides in informal settlements.⁶ An estimated 60% of urban families in Kenya reside in what would be considered slums, according to estimates from the World Bank.⁷ Expanding informal settlements have been identified as a recurring issue in African cities as a result of urbanization, and they are associated with unfavourable environmental conditions, pandemic diseases, and localized crimes⁸ which are the clear obstacles to achieving Africa's 2030 sustainable development goals. Nairobi, the capital of Kenya and the centre of commerce in Eastern Africa, is seeing significant population increase along with the rise of sizable informal settlements⁹. In the previous 50 years, the city's population increased from 0.51 to 439.7 million.¹⁰ Nearly half of Nairobi's population, or about 2 million people, reside in the city's informal settlements, which occupy only 5% of the city's residential zones and 1% of its total territory, according to a report by Amnesty International.¹¹

Due to a historical dearth of formal governance and public services in these areas, non-state organizations¹² or initiatives spearheaded by local residents frequently fill the void while simultaneously establishing new localized governance structures. These factors interconnect with daily risks brought on by economic inequality, ethnic conflicts, mortality, poor environmental conditions, high rates of morbidity and unemployment, as well as inadequate levels of education and healthcare. These areas have disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, criminality, and unstable employment for young people and women.¹³ As a result, including non-dominant voices like those of the lowest paid, women, and young people

⁶ Watson, R. T, 1998 Available online: : <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/500301511794282642/concept-project-information-document-integrated-safeguards-data-sheet>

⁷ United Nations Human Settlement Programme, *The challenge of slums: Global report on human settlements, 2003*, Available online: [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/UN-Habitat%20SSUDK %20Report Vol%204 final.LowRes.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/UN-Habitat%20SSUDK%20Report%20Vol%204%20final.LowRes.pdf)

⁸ (Ren et al., *Population density and spatial patterns of informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya* 2020)

⁹ United Nations, *Enhancing urban safety and security: Global report on human settlements 2007*

¹⁰ Baker. J. L, *Climate change, disaster risk, and the urban poor: Cities building resilience for a changing world* 2012; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019; Bolay.J.C, *Urban Planning Against Poverty: How to think and do better cities in the Global South* 2020

¹¹ Amnesty International, Kenya: The unseen majority: Nairobi's two million slum-dwellers 2021, p.3

¹² Gordon et al., *Collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement in Landscape Governance and Management in Africa: Lessons from practice* 2021, p. 53; Livingston & Walter-Drop, 2014, p. 127.

¹³ Schneider, *Participatory governance* 2010. p 48; Mkutu, *Security governance in East Africa: Pictures of policing from the ground* 2018, p. 65

is necessary if we want to improve our understanding of the resilience processes in these communities.¹⁴

Resilience on the other hand is a phrase used frequently in the humanitarian and development communities and is widely described as the capacity to tolerate, adapt to, or grow through crises and persistent adversity. According to The Sendai Framework (2015-30)¹⁵, The Resilience Alliance (2016)¹⁶ and the European Commission (EC) in 2012¹⁷, The EU Global Strategy on Resilience (2017)¹⁸ defined resilience as: The capacity to transform hardship (of many kinds) into personal, intra-community or in-group cohesion and perceived advancement, and to actively resist events and processes believed to do harm to oneself or one's community. Resilience frequently emphasizes the capacity to "bounce back"¹⁹ and to establish a state of equilibrium, recognizing innate and external attributes which insulate a person from the harshest consequences of adversity. It entails going back to a situation or state that existed before the crisis, going back to normal, and making sure that everything is operating as it should be.

There is not always a "normal" to go back to or a specific way that such systems 'should' operate. This is particularly true for adaptive social systems, which can behave substantially differently from one another depending on the situation. Its applicability to peacebuilding and conflict transformation has received much less attention. However, the idea of resilience and its application to development programming may lead to fresh perspectives on how conflicts are resolved, enabling academics and professionals to examine violence in new ways that draw on optimism and strength rather than tension and trauma. These discourses on resiliency may support the maintenance of repressive structures as they currently exist²⁰. In essence, there may be a gap between the emphasis on "the system" and the ability of social interactions, roles, and processes to alter, adapt, and reorganize in order to

¹⁴ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Role of science, technology and innovation in building resilient communities, including through the contribution of citizen science 2020, p. 25; (Jha et al., Building urban resilience principles, tools, and Practice 2013, p. 96);

¹⁵ Wilson. L. A et al, *Building Sustainability through Environmental Education* 2019)

¹⁶ Lewis & Conaty, *The Resilience Imperative: Cooperative transitions to a steady-state economy* 2012)

¹⁷European Union, *Supporting policy with scientific evidence* 2017, available at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-17-1555_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-1555_en.htm)

¹⁸World Vision, *Societal Resilience Through Persistence* 2020). Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/feedback/1494/attachment/090166e5b169fada_en

¹⁹ Comas-Diaz, L. et al. (2018).; Gardoni et al., P. 162 2019

²⁰ MacKinnon & Derickson, *From resilience to resourcefulness* 2018

promote development and provide room for change.²¹ Daily occurrences and unpredictability that can boost or deplete levels of resilience should be explored in what Grove (2018: 34) refers to as “permanent adaptability” to a chaotic environment. In informal settlements, adaptability to anticipated and unplanned change becomes crucial to resilience and peacebuilding as envisioned in the work conducted by the Life & Peace Institute. Cognisance of the fact that resilience requires awareness of how people interact with and are influenced by the circumstances of their communities and larger levels of national, subnational (county), constituency, ward and village interconnectivity.

The interrelated concerns are included in this article 's discussion of resilience as a multidimensional resource that may be used both on a daily basis and in response to special events, acknowledging the diversity of local resources and deeper layers of impacts in informal settlements. Buttressing²² Hall and Lamont's (2013: 2) submission of resilience is condensed to be the capacity to sustain and advance well-being in the face of challenges. As Mieth (2015: 46) points out, resilience is ‘an outcome or process rather than a set of symptoms or characteristics’²³ hence the conflict transformation and peacebuilding lens applied to Life & Peace Institute's (LPI) resilience research. The following working definition was used to define resilience - The capacity to manage change peacefully, to respond creatively when crises emerge, and to transform conflict into positive outcomes.

Methodology

LPI conducted a qualitative study on Analysing Resilience: A Peace and Conflict Model (AR: PCM) to examine resilience in settings of long-term, prolonged conflict and insecurity in four urban informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya: Eastleigh - Air Base and Eastleigh North²⁴, Kibera - Kianda Village (Sarang'ombe Ward) and Lindi²⁵, Majengo- Digo and Kitui, Mashimoni, Katanga, Sofia, and Shauri Moyo/Bama Market²⁶, and Mathare - Mlango Kubwa

²¹ Berkes et al., *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems* 2003; Smit, Barry & Wandel, Johanna. (2006). Adaptation, Adaptive Capacity and Vulnerability. *Global Environmental Change*. 16. 282-292.

10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2006.03.008.; Gunderson LH and Holling CS. 2002. *Panarchy: understanding transformations in systems of humans and nature*. Washington: Island Press.

²² Lamont's. *Neoliberal resilience and the crafting of Social Blocs* 2020; Luthar & Cicchetti, *The construct of resilience: Implications for interventions and Social Policies* 2000.

²³ Muriithi et al., *Occupational resilience: Construct and practice implications in occupational therapy* 2015; Joseph.J., *Resilience as embedded neoliberalism: A Governmentality approach* 2013

²⁴ Located East of the Central Business district, mostly populated by the Somalis.

²⁵ Kibera is Kenya's largest urban slums with 13 villages. It is also one of the largest on the continent

²⁶ Majengo is a collection of slums in Nairobi, Kenya with a population of approximately 500,000 people

(Oilibya Stage), Kyamutisya, an area bordering Mlango Kubwa (Mabatini), Kiamaiko/Kismayo.²⁷

The 30-month study looked at the actions of individuals in conflict that are frequently overlooked or otherwise invisible to traditional conflict analysis models, such as banal, quotidian, and often undramatic manifestations of resilience and the ways in which people embrace nonviolence and promote community development in their daily lives. Focusing specifically on those that reject the use of violence and decide to pursue alternatives despite their circumstances, the research to gain more incites on why certain individuals respond differently and what allows them to do so. What role do their experiences, relationships and perceptions have in the choices they make. Such acts of resilience are frequently invisible and are not captures by the mainstream conflict analysis models that put focus on threat, risk, spoiler, division, fault and problem-focused metrics. However, in every environment of insecurity and violence, there are always individuals resisting, working toward peace, and refusing to surrender to hopelessness.

The project employed resilience as a lens through which to comprehend violence and to conduct unconventional forms of conflict analysis based on strength, individual agency, and endogenous assets within communities. In doing this, and by exploring the absence and rejection of violence in equal measure to its presence and normalisation, the project aspired to identify previously hidden entry points for more effective peacebuilding work. In doing so, learn from community members in order to improve peace practice by using a respondent-led and locally designed research methodology that takes the principles of resilience in recognising, existing agency and locating decision-making and solutions within communities.

Local ownership of the research agenda was critical. During the data collection, debriefings were performed at study sites, where researchers from one place might host those from another (as well as welcoming LPI into their communities – temporarily). Furthermore, data analysis was done in a collaborative manner, with community researchers determining the exercises' schedule and setting. As members of the communities being investigated, the researchers took the lead in validating the findings. This process involved more than just looking for the "truth" of the data; it also involved continuing to let respondents — who provided the data — shape the research's future course, provide feedback on dissemination plans and briefing paper launch preparations, and participate in sense-making exercises aimed

²⁷ Mathare informal settlement is the second largest informal settlement in Kenya.

at reaching an agreement on the data's meaning. It rethinks the researcher-researched relationship to ensure that those providing data gain as much (or more) from the process as those asking questions. With a conflict transformation approach, the research methodology was designed to be a peacebuilding exercise, asking critical questions that explored avenues for conflict transformation and peace building. LPI's fundamental goal was to comprehend the interconnected mechanisms that enable local residents to achieve and retain well-being while also being aware of the larger limitations imposed on their potential. Our fieldwork is therefore intended to investigate "local actors' understandings, praxis and initiatives around resilience²⁸ in the four informal settlements in Nairobi. In the long run, the model seeks to use these unique manifestations of resilience as springboards for creating peacebuilding strategies that address the origins of the conflict from which they have arisen - to foster "transformative resilience."

The respondents were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. AR: PCM does not aim to produce a dataset that permits wide generalizations or statistical significance in the conventional, quantitative sense. It is essential that specific respondents with particular experiences share information about their experiences and perspectives because of the nature of the research, which aims to shed light on overlooked, invisible, unusual, or extraordinary actions taken by people in contexts of protracted conflict. Additionally, this method demands that all stages of the process, from design to selection to analysis, be overseen by researchers who really live and work in the settings being studied. To make sure that participants could be selected, it was crucial for researchers to be familiar with the neighbourhoods in the project sites, the locals and the places where they interact, as well as the region's history of insecurity. A sample size of 80 was reached with people who, for the most part, had never participated in any research processes before. Among the respondents were:

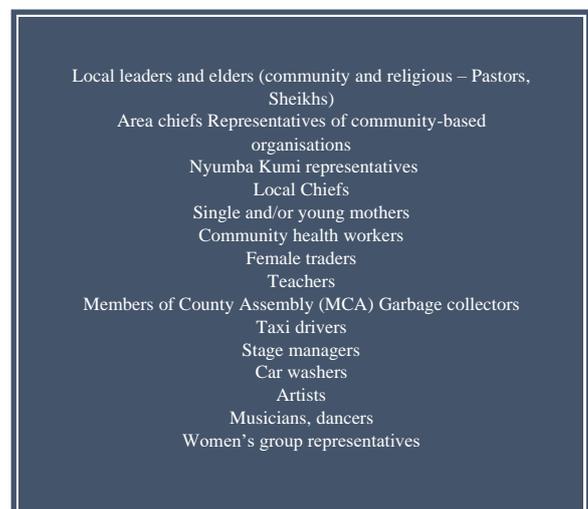
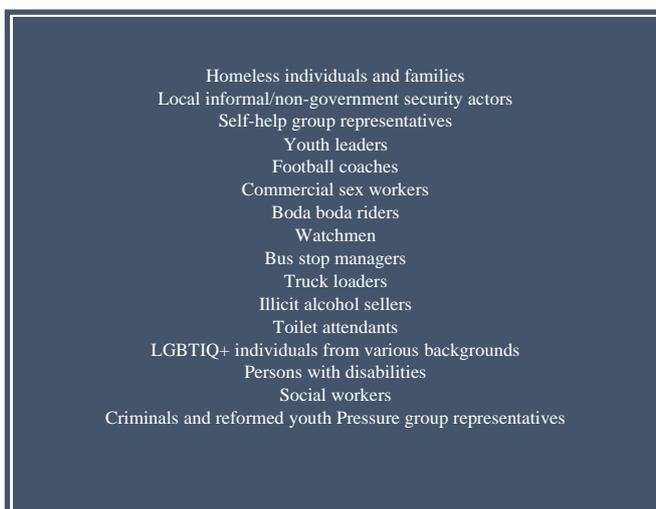
²⁸ Hajir et al., *The 'South' speaks back: Exposing the ethical stakes of dismissing resilience in conflict-affected contexts*, 2021

Mooting Resilience In Informal Settlements

“Resilience [as] I understand is like crime, violence and war... They are challenges we go through in the community, like violence, gangs, drugs and substance abuse... instead of all those challenges pulling us down we come up stronger.” Female, youth group member and Community Health Volunteer, 27, Eastleigh

Resilience as defined by the community reflected that individuals’ experiences, backgrounds, and relationships to conflict and insecurity. Four general definitional themes developed:

- ⊗ Resilience related to response – centred on endurance, perseverance, overcoming adversity, adaptation, flexibility, rehabilitation, and bouncing back.
- ⊗ Resilience related to an event – aimed in especially at unanticipated challenges experienced throughout life that are either forced upon or uncontrollable.
- ⊗ Resilience related to inter-personal and inter-group relationships – embracing diversity and living with difference at all levels (ethnic, religious, economic, and others).
- ⊗ Resilience related to actions – connected with pacifism, nonviolence, rejecting intimidation and "bad behaviour," volunteerism, humility, and a focus on finding solutions. This is most cases had a religious undertone, as a connection to God was seen to provide a sense of comfort, increasing personal resilience.



Resilience in the four research sites was demonstrated by **a readiness to, and the act of, working with supposed enemies and crossing conflict lines** a similar is shared by (Cnaan & Milofsky, 2019, p. 381). It is related to having the capacity to see the goodness and humanity in those whom the majority perceives as being dangerous or incapable of being pardoned, as well as having room for some measure of forgiveness. A community leader, in Kibera, when asked who she relies on in daily life, stated:

I rely on our boys [young men often stereotyped criminals] around because they're the immediate people and what I know is that, you know, they are human beings as much as I think we brand them a lot, and if they mean to make sure that you're safe, they do it. The boys are young men in the community. Most of them are unemployed or most of them, you know, they just try to, to survive, to live and they are there to protect their community.

However, applying this strategy to community members who are criticized by others as "outsiders," dangerous, or a bad impact on the larger community is not without risk. Crossing barriers in an effort to unite and foster unity can lead to new dangers.

Resilience against a common threat: The study findings demonstrate that the presence of a common threat—an external force (people, legal frameworks, institutions, ideas or ideologies)—is an effective catalyst for communal resilience, for strengthening the bonds between individuals within a community, allowing them to withstand, resist, or perhaps grow stronger through difficulty.

[the] issue of insecurity that started in the area... [it is connected to] this group which has been formed for the reformist [former criminals], because if we leave [crime] one person at a time it will be an easy target to the police. So, we thought it will be better if we are together and it will be even harder to the police to come and harass us. That's why you see the police mostly trying to split those groups so that it will be easy [for them to victimise individuals].²⁹

Another respondent, a civic activist and community leader from Kibera, described how dangers to a community can bring its members closer together:

...insecurity can bring positive organising. In my community, Sarang'ombe – we don't have so many cases. Do I say robbery, or something like that? Especially the attacks at night that we witnessed, and everybody talks about in Kibera, because the community are organised in a way that if alarm is raised, then you know, you're dead if it was you doing that [attack]. So, I think that is good organising. You've got this positive organising... [the] community is able to organise themselves because of the past experiences, at times attacks may come from people who are not from the community.

However, it's also vital to remember that social interactions and survival techniques are not always beneficial. The same elements that strengthen a group's cohesion for a more powerful group may exclude less powerful groups.

²⁹ A member of a group constituted by former criminals, 24, in Mathare

Resilience entails actively analysing and bridging gaps: For individuals who reside in Nairobi's urban informal settlements, showing compassion to others is a way to build resilience. It is not just concentrated on the healing, agency, and inner power of a single person. Being a resource for the community, a support system, a mediator of knowledge, and an advocate for justice all contribute to being resilient. In practice, this entails coaching others, disseminating knowledge, spreading awareness, assisting (young) people who have been wrongfully detained and/or arrested, assisting unofficial community groups in obtaining official registration, assisting marginalized people in obtaining identification cards, managing barazas, and generally being available for others.

Resilience visible in everyday gestures of support: Findings reveal that helping others (as a sign of personal resilience) makes respondents feel at peace. This finding is related to the personal salvation that arises as a motive for learning through difficulty and attempting to change one's circumstances. Respondents are helped in "keeping going" by the comments and testimonies of individuals who have been helped. These simple deeds of kindness, from insignificant, ephemeral actions to help someone else at one's own expense to small acts of support, are a potent catalyst for resilience. For instance: "In a day I might have linked one person [to the support structures they need] and they succeed. There is one [thing] I tell myself and that is my moto, even if it is holding an elderly woman's hand to help her cross the road or leaving a matatu seat for someone that makes me satisfied, because it's part of development. Those small things are what change people's lives."³⁰

Social cohesiveness, social support systems, and participation in the community are essential components of community-based resilience. These present 'ripe' opportunities to bring people together through and fostering relationships in order to alter people's perspectives through conversing with them. A respondent, 50, in Mathare – now a member of the District Peace Committee and a community health volunteer – spoke of the ways that experiences of insecurity in her life have given her strength through the support she received from others in times of hardship: "No, that [experience of insecurity in which she was targeted when attempting to mediate a dispute] didn't [interfere with my life]. One thing I came to know [is that] people love me." Cohesion within informal settlements promotes communal assets, community involvement, and social capital, including shared values and a sense of place,

³⁰ Female, human rights defender and community mobiliser, 44, Mathare

pride, social control, and togetherness.³¹ A victim of sexual violence, 42, now a community health volunteer in Mathare, spoke of the ways in which her relationships assist her in overcoming fear, and exercising resilience:

What helped me is called a support group...I came to realise there are others like me. I would share my story with someone and they [would] tell me their story. This helped me overcome the fears and saw that it is normal [to be afraid]... So, I don't have faith with the government, but I got the support [and] the stress was over.

The process of figuring out how to establish long-term, reciprocal security across conflict lines and peaceful co-existence³² should include, in particular, those who are viewed as causing or maintaining insecurity, such as criminals, violent groups, police, and youth. This common mindset, it would seem, fosters resilience. For instance, female respondents, however, were clearer on the use of dialogue, becoming humble through experiencing insecurity, and seeking to understand those that cause insecurity. Men, conversely, spoke more of reporting criminal activity, of calling leaders together, and of insecurity leading to better mechanisms and institutions.

Resilience is built through extraordinary personal suffering responders recount friends being murdered, losing trust in spouses, and other trauma — in which healing gives renewed purpose. Additionally, these encounters may encourage a person to oppose violence and work to persuade others to do the same. Talking to people who other people fear, like convicted criminals, offers “mileage in the community.”³³ People seem to be strongly motivated by the prospect of serving as an example to others and being looked up to, which may lead them to engage in resilient behaviours. However, to be resilient, one must devote constant, ongoing attention to the causes of insecurity and the likelihood that disagreement will result in violence. Being **resilient** therefore **entails developing oneself as a community resource**— someone who can be relied on in difficult circumstances—and being solution-focused. But

³¹ Forrest & Kearns, *Social cohesion, social capital and the neighbourhood* 2001; Madonsela, 2017; Mitra et al., 2017

³² Benjamin & Mbaye, *The informal sector in Francophone Africa* 2012 available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/9364>

³³ Luthar & Cicchetti, *The construct of resilience: Implications for interventions and Social Policies* 2000; Muriithi et al., *Occupational resilience: Construct and practice implications in occupational therapy* 2022; The World Bank (2012:6) World Bank, *The Informal Sector in Francophone Africa: Firm Size, Productivity, And Institutions*. 173-193. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/9364>

this might result in exhaustion, overwork, and, as reported by the respondents, having very little time for oneself or personal needs.

According to the respondents, **resilience is apolitical** - it is not associated with partisan ends, political advancement, or the victory of one ideology over another. Politics, wealth, or power have no place in the efforts made to promote and advance a community's interests toward peace and enhance the lives of the community. Within the context of informal settlements', it is found in human connection, that is - family support, peer relationships, livelihoods, equitable employment, social connections, shared values, and unpredictable conditions resulting from the mainly unplanned, unfettered, and poorly maintained residential areas as well as the volatile local informal economy.³⁴All these play a role in determining the dangers to sustainable processes of resilience³⁵ as they drive action to meet basic needs and counter injustice. Due to their restricted ability to adjust or access resources, populations in informal settlements are more susceptible to risk exposure. According to Bolzan and Gales (2018), the various roles, behaviours', and activities expected of demographic groups lead to unequal opportunities and an uneven distribution of social risk affecting community-based resilience as economic growth, stability of livelihoods and equitable employment opportunities are crucial formation of resilient communities.³⁶

It is also crucial to express serious concerns that neo-liberal processes would supplant resilience. By doing this, vulnerability is made to seem normal, and people and small groups are then held accountable for managing the effects of larger economic, environmental, political, and social restrictions and changes.³⁷ This is supported by the views held by few respondents described resilience as simply the outcome of having no alternative options or means of escape.

Additionally, a small number of respondents mentioned that engaging in **crime was a sign of personal resiliency**, a way to exercise agency, get out of a precarious position, or locate "greener pastures." In this sense, resilience is not always peaceful. Other respondents added that individuals who stand to lose if the truth (about their behaviour) is disclosed and will therefore conceal from it) may be resilient if they reject the "truth." One of the

³⁴ Sousa et al., *Individual and collective dimensions of resilience within political violence* 2013; Garbarino & Kostelny (1996)

³⁵ Seeliger & Turok, 2013

³⁶ Godschalk et al., *Urban hazard mitigation: Creating resilient cities* 2003

³⁷ Vertigans et al., *Resilience in a Kenyan informal settlement during the covid-19 pandemic* 2021; Brown, 2016 Powers & Faden, 2019; Grove, 2018; Blewitt & Tilbury, 2014

respondents described fear as the driving force behind alertness, which develops out of a need to be aware of your surroundings because they can contain criminals or other dangers. A small number of survey participants also mentioned resilience as a talent—a quality one is born with rather than one that can be mastered.

Violence And Resilience in Informal Settlements

"Violence has been normalised in our communities and it can increase or decrease resilience in the community. Extra judicial killings has decreased the resilience of the community as in some cases they use extra force. But increases when justice is served for criminals who have been terrorising people. Resilience also decreases when rape and defilement cases are disregarded. Only because violence has been normalised." Editar Ochieng, Resilience Facilitator, Kibera

Violence has a complex and frequently counterintuitive effect on a person's capacity for resilience. Witnessing violence can either elicit powerful forms of rage that inspire action or profound melancholy that sparks life-altering choices that give one's life meaning. In other instances, direct experiences of violence against oneself lay the groundwork for transforming empathy toward people who have experienced a similar history.³⁸ However, using violence might result in a sense of agency similar to how resilience is defined by academics. The relationship between violence and resilience is further problematized in the section that follows.

Authority, injustice and resilience: Research findings indicate that because people move their networks of reliance and support to non-state actors, experiences of police victimization, illegal detention, and the general unpredictable nature of police activities may paradoxically contribute to a more cohesive and resilient communal fabric in the informal settlements. Important to note personal resilience in some cases decreases in relation to youth and their experiences with police brutality. Inversely, community resilience increases due to a shared experience against a 'common enemy.' For instance, "standing up to" authorities, and calling out injustice administered by state actors (primarily police) appears to contribute to this – to individual confidence, to a stronger "love" for one's community and a will to protect it against perceived threats. A commercial sex worker, 36, from Majengo noted the connections – and networks of mutual support – that are formed within the community when injustice is felt among them.

³⁸ Stout & Schwab, 2002 , p. 18

Violence and resilience appear to be related in a convoluted and occasionally illogical way. For instance, it seems that the presence of another community that they can defend themselves from can make a community more cohesive, trustworthy, and supportive. The possibility exists to increase intra-group resilience in the face of a shared external opponent. Additionally, employing violence may be empowering since it gives one a sense of control over their situation and fosters independence, both of which help people become more resilient. A person who has a history of being associated with violent organizations or who has committed crimes may also be able to contribute to peace in the future in a special way because they are well-known and feared by others. In other words, acting violently in the past may have given them the chance to act resolutely in the future.

According to research, experiencing fear or violence can help people become more resilient. When someone has experienced a particular type of violence (like theft, for example), their capacity to empathize with those who are experiencing it may grow. However, it also seems that dealing with violence itself strengthens interpersonal resiliency and intracommunity cohesiveness, encouraging the development of fresh approaches to conflict management and more potent institutions of peace. Conversely, violent behaviour both destroys and changes social networks. Trust, which is essential for group activity and devotion to political leaders, is destroyed. Identity groups join forces with armed gangs and organizations in order to defend themselves or further group goals. Violence can alter social identities, though controversially, in some cases for the better. For instance, the leadership roles that women and young people assumed during the conflict have changed their status, which can result in both new opportunities and family and social challenges. By altering communal perceptions and behaviour, violent shock destroys the normative function and cooperative structure of nonviolent regimes.

In order to build and preserve resilience, it is important for people to maintain relationships with others. These relationships serve as decision-making tools — plays a substantial role in helping people build resilience at the personal level. These connections are significant across contexts, age ranges, genders, educational attainment, and all other identification markers. Generally, male respondents viewed state authorities as significant and claimed that they were eager to meet and develop relationships with entrepreneurs and the police, whereas female respondents focused on family and friends and expressed a desire to meet and understand violent groups.

Yes! Hardcore criminals [are] hard to engage... [I support] the police to talk to the security officer, [as] there is no day a young person will go to a police station and have a chat with [a] police officer, because the police do not care about what is happening in these areas – they just come to harass the community.

This brokering between formal security actors and community members was a common feature among a number of respondents. For instance, a community leader, from Kibera highlighted the trust-building and guarantor role she plays between young people and police:

The local Police Commissioner tried to get my assurance that if they withdrew the police, then the boys [young men thought to be undertaking criminal acts] would stop. And what was interesting is that I actually assured him, because I knew who the boys were. When the policemen were there and they would just, have their demonstrations and go home. Once the police were assured, I think within 15 minutes we did not have the police around and the boys chanted and at the end of the day they went home.

In some instances, as per the study findings, proponents of the use of force see it as a way to use violence to benefit the community, particularly when it is done as part of efforts to establish (informal) security service systems in the absence of the state. Here, a connection between employing violence, creating agency, and experiencing a sense of accomplishment in furthering the goals of the community starts to take shape. A local Mathare DJ describes this connection:

It was started with us. We were, like, 30 members when it started. People felt no need to join, but as we continued, they saw what we were doing was good, [and] they started joining the group... there are those who didn't have houses – now they can pay rent, they were not ok, but now they can save, pay rent, buy clothes, they are stable.

Results paint a picture of respondents attempting to demonstrate their ability to survive, prosper, and "do good" without "intervention" from the state. This emphasizes how using violence fits into the larger resilience paradigm because it develops the same psychological defences, strengthens love for one's community, and serves as a channel for furthering the demands of the respondents' most important values.

Resilience built through violence and trauma: According to some study respondents, resilience is developed over time by experiencing insecurity and hardship; one becomes accustomed to it, fortifies themselves via repetitive trauma, and develops resilience through struggle. For instance, a 44-year-old Mathare resident and human rights activist from Mathare

“as per my understanding it [resilience] means the struggle we undergo that helps us to withstand anything. It's also more of the self-driven initiative.” Individual experiences and trauma are mentioned by respondents. Others draw attention to problems in the neighbourhoods, the external environment, and social insecurity.

Findings, however, suggest that using violence can actually be empowering, serving as a way to seize and use one's own agency. Additionally, once violence is utilized, a precedent is established that opens up additional avenues for action moving forward. For example, ex-offenders are aware that they won't be assaulted by other community members because of their reputation of being feared by others. In this sense, using violence may create the circumstances necessary to practice resilience toward peace in the future - to carry out peace-related actions in conflict that might be off-limits to others, and to pursue an alternative course of action.

Violence, on the other hand, seems to be a limited resource for boosting resilience and frequently results in a shift in viewpoint. According to research, the use of violence reaches a pinnacle - a tipping point - that compels one to pursue an alternate (sometimes radically nonviolent) course of action. A friend joining a violent extremist group, getting shot, becoming paralyzed, a mother being raped, losing one's physical faculties, or losing one's capabilities can all be examples of particular events that contribute to this. When a respondent is exposed to personal tragedy, their perceptions are drastically altered. A mother in Majengo, whose son had joined al-Shabaab, returned to Nairobi, and was subsequently killed, stated that:

“I have really changed because I no longer feel alone and profiled. I have changed and I also want to change others. I went through a trauma healing training, which really helped me see things in a different angle.”

Lessons From Resilience Peacebuilding

I. Need to rethink definition of resilience in peacebuilding

In Nairobi, a number of respondents emphasized violating the law, utilizing crime, taking security and justice into one's own hands, reworking the state's monopoly on the use of force by forming non-state security provision, displaying an ability to exist without state support, and defending one's community against the ‘other’ as ways to build and demonstrate resilience. Therefore, a useful definition should take into account both the positive and

negative aspects of resilience (as a resource for maintaining peace or using force) and take into account the possibility of using violence to foster and exercise resilience. In times of conflict and uncertainty, it should refrain from making moral judgments about what constitutes ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behaviour. It should also emphasize resilience to foster intracommunity solidarity as a driving force for interacting with people outside of one's immediate circle and considered ‘enemies.’

II. Insecurity generates resilience – in addition to testing it

The study's findings suggest that undergoing a traumatic experience first-hand, helps people better comprehend it and develop successful strategies for overcoming challenges. Additionally, this personal experience of insecurity inspires a desire to influence other people's opinions. A youth leader and chairperson of a local community-based organisation, 38, in Mathare noted that: “...a person who hasn't gone through something is the one who can't operate it, but someone who has gone through something, understands it.” This is one way that insecurity, among others, may serve as a catalyst for resilience actions taken in the direction of peace. People become more resilient and motivated as a result of the subsequent process of tracing the causes of violence, outlining the issue, and coming up with solutions. In the long-run, insecurity can promote more resilience.

III. Development of a resilience for Peace Toolkit Test.

“Resilience defines me. It taught me to trust the process through reflection - from where I am coming from to where I am today. By implementing the program, I have been able to realise my potential as a leader in Majengo and see the bigger picture of what hardship does to people.”
Kennedy Kimeu, Resilience Facilitator Majengo

In 2021, LPI concentrated on the resilience toolkit test developed as a result of research conducted in Nairobi's informal settlements of Eastleigh, Kibra, Majengo, and Mathare, the study identified 11 themes as a source of respondents' resilience, that were captured in the Resilience in Conflict Analysis Toolkit (RCAT); these themes are Sense of self, home, context, the other, authority, generation, personal history, capacity to transform. Capacity for empathy, relationship and violence, under each theme a set of two or more exercises were developed to engage the toolkit users in exploring their sources of resilience based on the testimonies, experiences, aspirations and fears of respondents.

1. **The context:** including the intensity and frequency of insecurity. The ability to move around with relative freedom, and space to think beyond survival and endurance only, appear to be necessary in order to exercise resilience.

2. **Home:** pride in one's area and community, in particular a sense of belonging and a desire to change stereotypes associated with the location – as well as a belief in one's ability to do so.
3. **Sense of self:** conviction in one's individual capabilities to enact change, driven by purpose, often through faith act as critical sources of independence and a will to draw oneself up and out of conflict.
4. **Relationships:** of dependence (inward and outward – both depending on others, and having others depend on the individual), as well as connectedness and scale of networks, and the ability to mobilise the community.
5. **Personal history:** experience(s) of violence and injustice and living surrounded by day-to-day insecurity. Memories of fear, harassment, suffering of self and others are also critical to decisions to respond differently in future.
6. **Capacity for empathy:** the desire to understand others, to communicate with, and change, the attitudes and behaviours of violent actors. An affinity with those that struggle, fall, and survive, and attaching value to this.
7. **Capacity to transform/positive futures:** the ability to change positively through hardship, to use insecurity to gain strength, resolve, and motivation. To learn from shocks, and action this learning toward defined goals.
8. **Authority:** the perception of, and relationship with, authority (in various forms) impacts individual resilience. This may include, for instance, perspectives and experiences with state actors, security services, or non-state violent groups.
9. **The other and in-group identity:** a group, community, area, idea or ideology to fight against, to unify and counter has the potential to galvanise individual and intra-group resilience, often along ethnic, intercommunity, religious or other lines.
10. **Generations:** interactions and perceptions across generations and age groups are important in the resilience of the community as a whole – where divisions across youth and the older generation impact the relative resilience of both. Treatment, status of, and opportunities for, youth – and their relationship to insecurity – are also significant.
11. **Violence:** its use, the opportunity to work with violent actors, and perspectives on the value of violence and role in developing agency and identity, as well as perspectives on when violence is justified, and what it achieves, are all fundamental issues around which resilience might be understood.

LPI has since tested the tool kit among study's respondents, community youth leaders, and community CBO leaders with the project site and in other areas with other groups such as Kenya for Resilience team of CSOs, with the LPI county managers, the rural context of Garissa and Turkana, the Kismayo women platform in Somalia and to hold community dialogue with both cross and single identity groups in addressing differences and finding a unifying factor. The tool employs a unique methodology in which participants interact with the various exercises in order to deeply reflect on self-transformation. The tool has since been used by the engaged participants on other platforms and in their community engagements in diverse fields that include conflict assessment, gender-based violence investigation, dialogue sessions, women team building sessions, and various workshops. The utility of resilience to the peacebuilding sector is growing as a result of this process. It is a significant development as resilience has previously been viewed more from the humanitarian angle. The RCAT will help popularise and standardise the practice and sustain the gains.

Interventions Using the Toolkit developed from Research

The use of resilience in conflict analysis toolkits as a conflict transformation tool aims to bring about positive social change that swaps out exclusionary, unfair, and unequal structures with ones that are inclusive, participatory, and equitable in order to achieve lasting peace.

The project was able to realise *communal transformation* through an increased number of peace leaders and community resilience ambassadors, most of the community members and youths engaged in the toolkit test, took up the resilience conversation and integrated 'resilience' into their activism, leadership and their day-to-day vocabulary on community development in project sites and beyond.

The project emphasized on **personal reflection and transformation** for the participants engaged, through the theme of sense of self, personal history and capacity to transform, the participants were encouraged to reflect on their life journey in their context, what it means to them and what kind of change they would like to realize in their life or the community. This informed most of the peace actions held in the community and encouraged transformational leadership, such is the case of a youth from Mathare, who had engaged in crime before, and now he is among the reformed youths who are providing security in an area that was known for high rate of crime especially snatching of phones. The theme of the other, capacity for empathy and relationship, played a critical in **interconnectedness** of different groups within the informal settlement, such is the case of a respondent who stated the need to dialogue with

the special and hard-to-reach youths in crime, to listen to them hear their story and look for avenues to engage them, **connecting across divides**, the cross-generation engagement, was key in demystifying the perception and stereotypes across generation for both the youths and the seniors, this gave room for linkages and connections, In Eastleigh on participant acknowledged how the five-day engagement between with the older generation has opened up her view about them especially because her dad left when she was very young, and in one of the participants she got a father figure.

Through the engagement, the project achieved **attitudinal and behavioural change** that leads to the choice to pursue nonviolent responses to conflict, by exposing participants to new opportunities for building relationships, especially between intergeneration by demystifying the stereotype of the youths and learning of the resilience across the different generations or participating in development processes. The project played a key role in **localising the term resilience**, community members that have participated in the project frequently use the term to describe their feelings or otherwise express themselves, it has simplified the definition of resilience and how people can use social change to enhance resilience. The **replicability and applicability of the RCAT** to other settings and processes, with respondents using the Toolkit to facilitate other multi-stakeholder engagements. All of this indicates the accessibility and resonance of the Toolkit across various contexts, and with a variety of stakeholder groups. The toolkit engagement with Kenya for Resilience Consortium and other CSOs has **contributed to a shift in the understanding**, attitudes, and practice of resilience programming among regional and international policymakers and practitioners towards more holistic, transformative models that improve the value and quality of their work. In this context home is not only considered as the house a person leaves in, it goes beyond the physical structure, It is the surrounding, the location, livelihoods, and the area's heritage that people associate with their identity. Home gives people a sense of belonging and a desire to change stereotypes associated with the location – as well as a belief in one's ability to do so, It includes a place of personal identity, centre of reference, openness, which lays a foundation on their relationship with others – their community. The pride that people hold for their homes has enabled them promote cohesion by banking on the unifying factors within their surroundings, it has increased the need to resolve dispute and avoid conflict to ensure there is peace, one respondent from Mathare mentioned that the kind of unity in the area is overwhelming, people always join hands to support each other in a difficult time.

The local-led approach of the toolkit that engaged 2 researchers from the community of engagement hassled to the researchers being positively impacted by the project. The researchers are using the Toolkit in their own spaces and spheres, integrating the RCAT into their daily lives, by localising the Toolkit in a range of development-related topics, and improving their facilitation techniques across the areas in which they work. This also improved their skills and knowledge of their communities and community development approaches through the platform of exposure, these included broadening networks locally (within Eastleigh, Kibera, Majengo and Mathare) and nationally (particularly in Garissa and Turkana Counties), getting opportunities to engage with different organization on both resilience and research work. Of noteworthy mention is the fact that the tool kit has been used and continues to be used by groups and institutions of diverse backgrounds with positive outcomes. For peacebuilders it can be peacebuilding counselling as it challenges individuals' to really assess themselves, their work and the environment within which they find themselves.

Conclusion

In contexts of fragility, violence, and instability, such as informal settlements, resilience is needs-based, demand-driven, sparked by empathy, and inspired by a sense of personal obligation, rather than short-term individual gains. It excludes some actions and decisions while not including others. Depending on the setting, shock, or stress in issue, pursuing peace, utilizing violence, dividing communities, or uniting them are all examples of resilience, and all have the potential to increase one's own resilience, either at the expense of others or for one's own gain. According to this research, a person's awareness of what is required to improve their personal condition or the development of their community, to oppose actions that are thought to be harmful, and to choose actions that will benefit both themselves and the community, is what defines resilience in conflict within informal settlements.

Social capital and coherence are destroyed by violent conflict. However, these very same elements aid in community coping, adaptation, and recovery. People lose their connections to resources and access to networks that would otherwise help them survive in a crisis when relationships within and across communities, as well as links between communities and the government, deteriorate. Resilience may be a novel way to start conversations with non-state armed groupings, people who are considered criminals, and more broadly, people who live on the fringes. It can be a conversation starter and a point of entry for relationship-building (in

particular, actors that would typically be suspicious of the motivations of researchers and peacebuilding programming). Instead of mistakes, pre-determined criminal activity, and bad choices, it may be possible to speak with and understand actors who are frequently viewed as "hard-to-reach" but who are also crucial to the continuation of conflict and insecurity by emphasizing strength, the potential for positive change, and guiding conversations on personal experiences, hopes, and aspirations. Resilience is created and sustained via connections, friendship, trust, support, and family. The ability to understand and engage with the "other" and have empathy are essential. Both non-zero sum thinking and an emphasis on the prospect of a bright future are essential.

It would seem that practicing resilience simultaneously builds and develops it by opening up fresh vistas of opportunity that could serve as potential new paths for fostering resilience, leading to a snowball effect. Resilience works in a circular fashion in this way. By boosting one's belief in the possibility of change and so strengthening one's resolve to bring about such change. Participating in peacebuilding activities explicitly emerges as a way to reinforce the resilience required to accomplish so in the first place. Building motivation and enhancing individual belief in the possibility of changing one's circumstances, as well as the resolve to effect these changes, are key components of peacebuilding work. These include articulating a central issue related to conflict, identifying its roots, and developing solutions. Exercising resilience offers up fresh avenues of possibilities in peacebuilding while also enhancing resilience. There are lessons to be learned from this that may be applied to how we think about the relationship between peacebuilding and resilience. One such lesson relates to how peacebuilding itself fosters resilience that can subsequently be used in other community related efforts.

This article has sought to emphasize the significance of comprehending social relationships and networks, as well as how these networks relate to vulnerability and resilience. It is obvious that certain groups experiencing a crisis have greater social ties than others, which helps them manage the situation better and bounce back faster creating resilient spaces and web to bridge divides informal settlements. As conflict and violence is often non-linear and nearer to an unending chronic stress than an individual sudden shock, it in some instances prompts irreversible changes within a community. This therefore means more coordinated efforts among actors is necessary for community resilience to increase rather than decreased as shown in the violence and conflict section of the article .

Resilience therefore offers a prism through which to theorize and explain why some people or communities have “the ability to withstand shocks and stressors, while others tip into spirals of fragility and violence.”³⁹ Structural, social, and individual resilience must all be strengthened at the same time as efforts to build community resilience. For communities affected by crises, resilience is anchored in agency, resistance, and transformation, which calls for a nuanced normative understanding of the daily practice and political economy of resilience. Additionally, as demonstrated by the study undertaken, it calls for conceptual clarity, meaningful assessment, and the cultural underpinning of sustainable interventions by government and non-governmental institutions.

³⁹Van Metre, *Resilience as a Peacebuilding Practice: To Realism from Idealism* 2014, p.2

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