



## Assessment of Non-State Peace Actors' Forum Initiatives in International Peace and Stabilization, Nairobi, Kenya

Oduor Geoffrey Opiyo<sup>1</sup>  
Elijah O. S. Odhiambo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[oduoropiyo.g@gmail.com](mailto:oduoropiyo.g@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup><https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6286-1110>

<sup>1</sup>Mount Kenya University, <sup>2</sup>Bomet University College, <sup>1,2</sup>Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the role of Non-State Peace Actors in promoting international peace and stability within the context of the Peace Actors Forum in Nairobi. Specifically, the study objectives sought to: Assess the effectiveness of the non-state peace actors' Forum initiatives; examine how the Peace Actors Forum's work in Nairobi contributes to broader international peace and stabilization; and lastly analyze the challenges and opportunities faced by non-state peace actors in advancing international peace and stability. The significance of this study includes providing practical implications for peace and diplomacy practitioners, as well as stakeholders. It also contributes to scholarly research. The study was framed by Liberalism, Constructivism, and Track II Diplomacy. Descriptive research design was employed, with a case study on Nairobi PAF platform population. The study administered interviews, survey and Focus Group Discussion., targeting 120 members of the platform. Questionnaires were administered to 93 members, 7 key informant interview informants and two FGDs targeting 15 participants, a response rate of 91.83% was secured. The results were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques; quantitative data is presented through frequency distribution tables, pie charts, and bar graphs, while qualitative data is presented in verbatim quotes to provide a nuanced understanding of the findings. From the findings, a significant majority of respondents reported positive outcomes of the initiatives by Nairobi non-state peace actors' forum, particularly in interventions like the Sondu conflict. Non-state peace actors had more international collaborations than state actors, facilitating access to resources and knowledge sharing. Nonetheless, non-state peace actors commanded higher legitimacy and trust from the local communities. Among the key points of departure between Non-State Peace Actors and State Peace Actors was that the state actors had government authority unlike the non-state peace actors who lacked powers to enforce peace policies or any agreement. The major challenge experienced by non-state peace actors was reducing donor funding; divisive politics and ethnic mobilization that instigated conflicts; and security risks among the non-state peace actors. The State Peace Actors relied on public funds from the government, which is always available through national budgets and donors, to fund their operation unlike non-state peace actors who relied on donations to fund their operations and given the diminishing availability of donors. The study concludes by confirming that non-state actors provide distinct advantages that are crucial to establishing sustainable peace, despite having fewer resources and institutional power. Finally, the study recommended that stakeholders in peace and conflict resolution should strengthen coordination among non-state actors and State Actors; strengthen local capacity building; engage in research; and advocate for supportive legal and policy framework.*

**Keywords:** Effectiveness, International Peace, Non-State Peace Actors, Nairobi Peace Actors Forum, Stabilization

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving international peace and stability dynamics, non-state actors continue to play a critical role, and their importance has grown. Contemporary conflicts are normally complex and multidimensional and as traditional peacebuilding strategies that were initially dominated by the state and intergovernmental bodies have proved to be inadequate to achieve sustainable peace, (Barnes, 2009). This rise in the initiative by the Non-State Peace Actors [NSPA] platforms, especially in conflict-prone and post conflicts states, exhibit paradigm shifts in peace and stabilization. These fora, which include; think-tanks, local community-leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations and other informal networks, have gained prominence in promoting dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, social cohesion and averting recurrence of violence, thus complementing state approaches to peace and stability, (Odendaal, 2013).

Nairobi City has become a strategic location for peacebuilding initiatives in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, with international organizations, regional peace bodies, think-tanks and local civil society organizations setting their bases in the city. This has been partly to support state and intergovernmental efforts in advancing regional peace and

stability, through constant collaboration and interaction with state actors, through both formal and informal fora. (Wanis-St. John & Kew, 2008). Therefore, Kenya provides a good opportunity to study how non-state peace actors, through their platforms, cooperate and support international peace initiatives, due to Nairobi's rich history of both local and regional peace engagements, including its mediation role in South Sudan and DRC Congo peace processes.

The growth of NSPA platforms is contributed by a blend of local and international factors. While they have been established to advance peace and stability beyond our national borders, some proponents have argued that their establishments have reacted security challenges that span beyond our state territories, as well as conflicts in the neighboring states including; Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, that have resulted in population displacements and the influx of refugees. Menkhaus (2004) postulates that NSPA Fora have two roles in this context: participation in local peace initiatives, as well as advocacy, mediation, and post-conflict recovery at an international level.

Despite growing importance for non-state peace actors' involvement in international peace, there is little study on how these fora influence international peace and stability. To add on, there are still debates on sustainability, scalability and impacts of their programmes, and how these programmes influence the official peace processes driven by state and intergovernmental actors, (Paffenholz, 2014). These non-state peace actors' fora also encounter myriads of challenges in their quest to advance sustainable peace, including; inadequate financing, weak cooperation amongst individual actors, political interference, as well as security threats. Therefore, to create and deliver purposeful and helpful solutions, donors, international organizations and policymakers need to have a deep understanding of these setbacks.

Peacebuilding has remained a very delicate initiative, with legitimacy playing a key factor. Whereas some NSPA for a have exhibited success in preventing conflicts and promoting reconciliations and cohesion, some encountered challenges gaining legitimacy, more so, when their strategies are thought to be prejudiced or out of touch with the needs of the local community they serve, thus being perceived to be advancing foreign agenda, (Lederach, 1997). While infightings withing the platforms, and disjointed approaches can result in a heterogeneous outlook of these fora, these scenarios can also provide an opportunity for creativity, teamwork and organizational improvement

This study seeks to evaluate critically how successful the Nairobi Peace Actors Forum, an example of city-based non-state peace actors' platform, are, in advancing international peace and stabilizations, through their initiatives. It will look at the vibrancy of the members, diverse skills and expertise of the members, transparency of the platform's activities, perceptions of the members on the success of the platform initiatives, as well as linking the local initiatives to the regional and global peace processes and structures.

This research seeks to contribute to the broader conversation on non-state actors in peacebuilding, through comprehensive how their initiatives blend with the state and intergovernmental approaches, linking local peacebuilding strategies and results to international peace architecture. It also illuminates on the challenges and opportunities that are presented to these platforms. It also emphasizes the best practices and lessons learnt, that can be replicated or upscaled in similar environments, thus, informing policy and practice. A deeper understanding of the role of non-state peace actors' platforms, especially in strategic regional hubs like Nairobi, is more important than ever, as the international community struggles with wars and instability.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The world is struggling to maintain peace, with conflicts and violence emerging from various areas, at difference levels; locally, nationally and at international stage. These various conflicts are driven by different triggers, including discrimination, youth unemployment, disputed community and national boundaries, uneven distribution of national resources, historical injustices, and climate change, among others. State and intergovernmental actors have tried to resolve them, but there exist glaring inadequacies from their strategies, thus providing an opportunity for the non-state actors, like the Nairobi Peace Actors' form, to step in and complement efforts by the state and intergovernmental actors.

Non-state Peace actors, are no doubt doing a splendid job in advancing international peace and stability, owing to their unique strengths, and weaknesses of state actors, albeit various setbacks. Although there are several studies conducted on the role of non-state actors, generally, without specifying, whether they are in a platform or not, or whether they are city based or not.

Ramirez (2024) emphasized on the importance of inclusive strategies and dialogue in entrenching sustainable peace in Nepal, when exploring how non-state actors contribute to peace in Colombia and Nepal. This did not specifically focus on the city-based peace actors' platform. International Alert (2022) also in its examination of the role of private sector in peace and conflicts dynamics in Kenya and Somalia, highlighted the need for organized evidence and analysis to develop inclusive strategies that engage the private sector in peace processes.

UWIANO Platform for Peace, which is a multi-stakeholders initiative, include both state and non-state actors, though operating in Nairobi, is heavily state controlled. MIDRIFT HURINET's Multisectoral Peace and Security Forum also brings together both state and non-state actors to collaboratively address peace and security concerns, this as well deny non-state actors' pure breed outlook. The findings of this study will fill the gap in the initiatives of the Nairobi

Peace Actors' forum, in their pursuit for international peace and stability, delving into the forum's effectiveness, challenges and opportunities.

## 1.2 Research Objective

To assess the effectiveness of the Peace Actors Forum's initiatives in promoting peace and stability in Nairobi.

## 1.3 Research Questions

How effective are the Peace Actors Forum's initiatives in promoting peace and stabilization in Nairobi?

## II LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

The study will be guided by a blend of three theories;

#### 2.1.1 Liberalism Theory

The effectiveness of Nairobi Peace Actors Forum (PAF) can be analysed through the Liberalism lens, which lays foundational framework by underscoring cooperation, interdependence and promotion of shared values as vital to sustainable peace, (Galtung, 2000). PAF embodies liberal principles by its multi-stakeholder approach, convening civil society, local communities, activists, think-tanks, international non-state organizations, to advance inclusive and rights-based peacebuilding processes. Through the promotion of civil rights, values and social justice, PAF exhibits how liberal values can be applied by non-state peace actors, thus providing guidelines to assess effectiveness of their initiative, by promoting trust, legitimacy and sustainable peace.

#### 2.1.2 Constructivism

According to Simons and Tucker (2018), Constructivism provides framework through which the effectiveness of non-state actors' initiatives can be evaluated, through placing importance on the role of identity, norms and social construction. The PAF's identity building process, including how it engages local stakeholders to construct the meanings of peace, security, justice and stabilization in local terms, is also critical. Constructivism recognizes the forum's agency in shaping peace narratives and not merely being secondary to state and intergovernmental actors, through co-constructing peace processes with both the state and international actors. The theory therefore guides the assessment of PAF's effectiveness, not only through outcomes of their initiatives, but also through its' normative influence and credibility within the community.

#### 2.1.3 Track II Diplomacy

Track II diplomacy advocates for informal, non-governmental dialogue between conflicting parties, providing a valuable framework for understanding the role of non-state peace actors, such as civil society, religious leaders and community groups in promoting peace and stability. Track II is relevant to PAF that facilitate these dialogues, creating safe spaces for candid discussions and exploring alternative solutions. It allows non-state actors to propose innovative solutions to sensitive issues that may be too delicate for official discussions. The theory therefore guides this study in assessing how effective these informal strategies employed by PAF. Track II complements Liberalism, which emphasizes pluralism, cooperation and the role of international bodies in advancing peace. It further complements constructivism, by highlighting how these non-state actors could shape common norms, identities and narratives through informal dialogues and trust building.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

#### 2.2.1 International peace and Stabilization

Historically, multilateral organizations like the United Nations (UN), have been at the forefront of international peace and stabilization initiatives. The UN has put in place a robust framework for deploying peacekeeping operations in areas bedeviled by wars and violent conflict through the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). According to Richmond (2015), these missions are normally mandated to support humanitarian efforts, monitor ceasefires, safeguard civilians, and help in the political transition toward sustainable peace. The work of numerous UN agencies and international development partners support UN peacekeeping, which often operates in precarious environments where state legitimacy is unstable or disputed. Through initiatives that focus on addressing the structural causes of violence, such as poverty, inequality, and weak governance institutions, such institutions advance long-term cohesion and healing (Bah, 2013). This strategy exhibits a paradigm shift in peace-building from short-term stabilization to long-lasting, integrated approaches that incorporate institutional reform and inclusive development.

Regional and sub-regional organizations also continue to emerge as equally key actors in the international peace and stabilization arena in the recent past. In Africa, these bodies are becoming more accepted than before. Under the auspices of Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Union (AU) has adopted a more assertive approach in resolving disputes between or within the member states, frequently coordinating and collaborating with other international actors such as the UN. Some of the African-tailored initiatives to restore state legitimacy and boost regional stability include but not limited to; the AU's peace support missions in Somalia, Mali, and the Central African Republic (Mutahi, 2020)

It is also worth noting that the regional trading blocs are not left behind in the advancing of international peace and stabilization. While responding to the constitutional crises, the regional blocs such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) negotiate peace, use soft and preventive diplomacy, and impose sanctions. ECOWAS, for instance, has a proven track record of activating regional military interventions, when necessary, as well as political mediation to counter conflicts in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Liberia (ECOWAS, n.d.).

Despite these multi-level initiatives, true peace and stability remain fluid. This is partly caused by small arms proliferation, the emergence of non-state armed organizations, weakened or challenged state institutions, and youth bulge and perceived marginalization, as well as perceived invisible hands from outside Africa. Transnational challenges like terrorism, cross-border crime, and displacement occasioned by civil wars and climate change often compound the instability in the region, (Woldemariam & Öjendal, 2012). This has demanded versatile and context-specific approaches, those that are sensitive and respond to the local realities, as well as inclusive of the local actors, who are critical stakeholders in peacebuilding, as a result of the weaknesses of top-down, externally driven models of peacebuilding.

Globally, nationally and locally, peacebuilding initiative overlaps, just the same way conflicts and violence overlap and spread across these borders. According to Chandler (2014), Kenya as a nation has witnessed cycles of electoral violence that are frequently fueled by deeply rooted problems such as negative ethnicity, land injustices, and perceived political marginalization. Kenya has strived to counter these by implementing a few institutional changes meant to advance national unity, such as, the creation of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), established under the National Cohesion and Integration Act No.12 of 2008, which is mandated with eliminating hate speech and fostering cohesion. (Githaiga, 2020).

Kenya has shown deliberate move to promote international peace and security, through hosting of has hosted important peace talks, especially those pertaining to the wars in South Sudan, Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo and has sent troops to AU and UN peace missions (Mutahi, 2020), including the recent police mission to Haiti. Although such initiatives have resulted in mixed results and debates have arisen out of them, they show how Nairobi plays a dual role in advancing international peace and stability in the region as well as benefiting from it.

Local peace initiatives by both local, national and international non-state actors have expanded to be crucial component of Kenya's peace architecture at the grassroots level. Community-based initiatives whose aims are to address local peace challenges, empower women and youth, and promote intercommunal reconciliation and cohesion, with frequent assistance from global NGOs like Saferworld, Search for Common Ground, Mercy Corps, and International Alert (Munyua & Othieno, 2016), are important in strengthening social cohesion and preventing the recurrence of violence, particularly in contexts where state-led efforts have limited reach or legitimacy, such as city slums of Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa, Nakuru and Eldoret, and most intercommunity borders.

However, scholarly literature has in most cases not deeply explored how local peacebuilding forums, especially those situated in urban centers, feed into larger peace and stabilization frameworks, despite the acknowledged significance of non-state actors. Many of the available studies either, focus on conventional state diplomacy or grassroots interventions in rural areas, with inadequate consideration given to how local non-state actors in key urban areas like Nairobi, interact with and impact regional or international peacebuilding agenda. For instance, Mungai et al. (2020), look at the challenges and opportunities facing Nairobi County informal peace committees, highlighting their role in community-based peacebuilding

Thuku (2021) assessed the role of non-state actors to community-policing in urban informal settlements, considering them individually and narrowing their scope to informal setting and failing to link their initiatives to broader international peace. Focusing on the Nairobi Non-State Peace Actors Forum, enables this study to bridge this gap. This urban forum serves as a broad-based coalition, bringing together faith-based organizations, civil society organizations, think tanks and local leaders. As such, the study shows how localized, non-state peace actors in urban contexts can support and reinforce international peacebuilding frameworks by examining the mechanisms of legitimacy, influence, and coordination, to support international peace and stabilization.

### **2.2.2 Proximity and Strategic Position of Nairobi to Regional Peace and Stability**

Nairobi, being a strategic hub for trade, diplomacy, and regional political activity, offering it a crucial spot in East Africa. This has attracted many international bodies and institutions, including; diplomatic missions, and mediation

processes, which have been established in the city due to its prime location close to conflict hot spots like the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region (Chandler, 2014). Thus, Nairobi serves as both a logistical hub and a vital platform for resolving regional conflicts and instabilities owing to its proximity.

Most of the United Nation's agencies are based in the city, with UNEP, UN Habitat and UNON having their head quarter here and both directly and indirectly catalyze regional peace and stability, according to (Møller, 2013). Nairobi has in the past frequently hosted international peace processes, such as the peace talks in South Sudan, DRC Congo and Somalia, thanks to its diplomatic infrastructure, which easily facilitates high-level meetings, peace conferences, and conflict resolution workshops (Autesserre, 2014).

The city's economic vibrancy contributes significantly to stability, even beyond its diplomatic importance. Nairobi promotes cross-border investment and commerce as a regional commercial center, with major trade and investments giants in the regions having their bases here, this aids in economic integration and lessens structural causes of conflict including marginalization and poverty (Hansen, 2015).

Nairobi's advantageous position comes with risks as well, its legitimacy as a center for peacebuilding is exposed by internal security issues like terrorism and political instability (Simons & Tucker, 2018). Nairobi's internal stability and its involvement in regional peacebuilding are intricately linked, as these two dynamics demonstrate. The results of Nairobi's strategic location and networks of urban peace actors on regional and global stabilization agenda have received little attention in academic literature, despite its prominence. By analyzing Nairobi Peace Actors' forum role as an urban peacebuilding platform and its contributions to international peace and stabilization, this study strives to fill that gap.

### **2.2.3 Effectiveness of Non-State Peace Actors' Forum Initiatives in International Peace and Stabilization**

Beyond conventional state-centric perspectives, the international peacebuilding arena has evolved in recent decades to acknowledge crucial influence of non-state actors. These actors, which include; intergovernmental institutions, faith-based institutions, civil society groups, NGOs, and grassroots movements, usually function through formalized platforms that promote dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation after a conflict, (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010; Bah, 2013).

Non-state actors are usually commended for their agility, neutrality, and close relationships to impacted communities. Richmond (2015) emphasizes their ability to resolve local issues that traditional diplomacy cannot adequately address. Non-state actors' fora offer inclusive platforms for dialogue, enabling disputing parties to cooperate on problem-solving and establish trust outside of rigid state frameworks. These initiatives prioritize local ownership and contextual relevance in peace-building methodologies, thus, increasing changes for sustainable peace.

In peacebuilding processes like Colombia's, the Oslo Forum, run by Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has had a covert but significant impact, highlighting the value of informal, behind-the-scenes diplomacy (Galtung, 2000). In a similar vein, O'Keefe (2017) discovered that more women political empowerment considerably reduces chances for civil violence, highlighting the function of inclusive forums in strengthening peace and stability. This study, however, does not examine how these forums operate as coordinated platforms within frameworks for international peace.

Regional studies offer additional insights, although they also highlight limits. In West Africa, Bah (2013) distinguished three categories of civil non-state actors and validated their complementary function in rehabilitation and peacekeeping. However, the study fell short of examining the strategic engagement of international actors through urban-based forums. Matshanda (2022) studied the informal policy influence of civic actors in post-conflict Ethiopia, though, the research neither focused on formal platforms, nor their incorporation into international stabilization agendas,

Majak (2019) evaluated Oxfam's involvement in South Sudan, pointing up both the achievements and challenges in efforts at mediation and governance. Although instructive, the emphasis on a single organization provides little understanding of the forum-based strategy. Likewise, Mung'ou (2018) reported on the effectiveness of women in peacebuilding in rural Kenya, but this didn't either explore organized urban platforms or their influence on the regional and global level.

Most of these studies concentrate on either individual organizations, rural areas, or national-level actions, thus, supporting the importance of non-state peace players. The way urban-based fora, especially those such as the Nairobi Non-State Peace Actors Forum, jointly collaborate and coordinate to influence or promote international peace and stability agenda remains inadequately discussed in literature. This research examines the role that Nairobi's forum of non-state peace actors plays in international peacebuilding to close that study gap. With an aim of enriching literature on multi-level, forum-based peacebuilding in urban African environments, it explores how these fora establish legitimacy, collaborate with international partners, and connect localized peace initiatives with more comprehensive stabilizing frameworks.

## 2.2.4 Contribution of the Peace Actors Forum in Nairobi to International Peace and Stabilization Efforts

As discussed above, Nairobi has established itself as a strategic location for East African stabilization and peacebuilding in recent years, owing to its economic, diplomatic and geopolitical strength. Notably, through cooperative fora like the Peace Actors Forum (PAF), non-state bodies have increasingly influenced the peace landscape. These fora remain dynamic coordination platforms that convene different stakeholders, including grassroots movements, think-tanks, regional peace practitioners, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based institutions, and representatives from international organizations. They are more than just places for dialogue.

The Nairobi Peace Actors Forum has evolved into a vital platform where regional and international stabilization frameworks meet local peacebuilding techniques. It facilitates the exchange of resources, coordination of efforts, and knowledge between local actors and global peace agendas, acting as a key node in the larger ecosystem of peacebuilding. In this sense, the PAF is a good example of a participatory, bottom-up strategy for peacebuilding that complements conventional, top-down, state-centric peace operations, in advancing sustainable international peace.

Fundamentally, the Forum represents a decentralized, context-specific and flexible approach to peacebuilding. It addresses complicated conflict dynamics by utilizing local players' experience, networks, and cultural capital. Such fora are crucial for advancing inclusive dialogue, community-based reconciliation, and intercommunal and inter-generational trust, three critical pillars that support any sustainable peace effort, as Lund (2013) highlights. The Nairobi PAF fills important voids frequently left by more rigid, bureaucratic peace institutions because of its participatory nature, which enables it to stay flexible and sensitive to the unfolding conflict dynamics.

The Forum's potential to prevent conflicts is among its most significant contributions. It has actively contributed to the development and deployment of grassroots mediation frameworks, quick response systems, and early warning systems. The goal of these initiatives is to identify and defuse conflict triggers of violence before they turn into full-blown brutality. This is well captured in the United Nations Agenda for Sustaining Peace, which stresses proactive rather than reactive approaches to peace and security, such conflict prevention activities are highly compatible with global goals. These preventive initiatives further support Olsson and Öberg's (2010) assertion that critical ingredient in successful peacebuilding is restraining the recurrence of violence. The Forum's community-based monitoring and response networks are especially important in highly volatile areas within Nairobi and its peripheries, where political unrest or inter-ethnic tensions can quickly swirl into broader crises.

The Nairobi PAF's employs local capacity building is one of its approaches, through; supporting civic education, conflict resolution and peace dialogue training, and leadership development. These programs empower local actors to take ownership of peace processes in their communities, particularly women and youth. Building local capacities is a fundamental component of inclusive and sustainable peace, as Leonardsson and Rudd (2015) correctly argue, and it is not just an extension to official peace initiatives. Accordingly, the PAF champions for a locally-led, contextually appropriate, and sustainable paradigm of peacebuilding that transcends the confines of financing donors' timelines.

Nairobi PAF's does not operate in isolation from the national to international frameworks. The forum has continued to advocate for policies that make significant contribution to the development of peacebuilding agendas on a larger scale. The Forum offers vital insights into community perspectives, conflict drivers, and peacebuilding priorities through strategic partnerships, policy dialogue, and consultative workshops. Nonetheless, it coordinates its operations with international organizations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and continental frameworks like the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Richmond (2016) contends that when non-state actors, operating closest to conflict realities on the ground inform peacebuilding initiatives, their legitimacy and effectiveness are enhanced. Therefore, the Nairobi PAF serves as a vital bridge between grassroots peacebuilders and the architects of regional and international policy.

Although there are these successes, there is still a significant lack of information in the academic and policy-focused literature on how urban non-state actor platforms, such as the Nairobi PAF, influence international peace and stability. The current research is either focused on formal peacebuilding initiatives sponsored by states and intergovernmental organizations, or on grassroots interventions in rural or neglected areas. Urban fora like the PAF, which operate at the convergence of local action and international policy, navigating and influencing the international peace and stabilization agenda has not received much attention.

There are still several research gaps as mentioned above that need exploration, including the following; little research has been conducted on how platforms like PAF establish and preserve legitimacy among their many constituencies. Non-state forums must establish legitimacy by performance, inclusion, accountability, and trust, unlike state organs, which obtain legitimacy from legislative orders or electoral processes (Richmond, 2015). Particularly in a politically vibrant urban setting like Nairobi, where conflicting interests and narratives coexist, this legitimacy is constantly disputed and negotiated. Deeper understanding of the viability of non-state-led peacebuilding strategies can be obtained through investigating how the PAF handles these legitimacy issues.

Secondly, there is little information on the practical processes through which the Nairobi PAF converts local peace initiatives into contributions accepted by official international frameworks for peacebuilding. Aligning divergent

goals, schedules, and accountability frameworks is necessary to bridge the gap between grassroots peace programmes and international stabilization efforts; this is frequently a difficult and delicate balance. Disconnects that impede productive cooperation might arise from misalignments in donor expectations, administrative procedures, and cultural conceptions of peace. It may be possible to better integrate top-down stabilizing approaches with bottom-up peacebuilding if we have a better grasp of how the PAF handles these difficulties, (Mungai et al., 2020; Githaiga, 2020).

Thirdly, more empirical data is still needed to fully comprehend the political economy of peacebuilding in Nairobi. The PAF operates under a shrinking financial environment that is limited by donor priorities, short project cycles, and fluctuating geopolitical interests, much like many other non-state peacebuilding forums (Bailey, 2018). It is therefore unclear how foreign funding influences the Forum's coalition dynamics, organizational autonomy, and programmatic orientation. Furthermore, rivalry among NGOs for the very few resources can lead to silos, split peace initiatives, and erode the collaborative culture that the PAF aims to promote. Evaluating the PAF's resilience and effectiveness requires an understanding of how Nairobi PAF handles both internal and external pressures, as a platform.

Lastly, there has been little systematic study on the scope, character, and significance of the PAF's collaboration with regional and international peace and diplomacy stakeholders, including representatives from the African Union, IGAD, and the UN, despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary. It is still unclear whether these interactions have an influence on official peace talks or if they are primarily symbolic. Evaluating the true significance of these connections is essential to understanding the PAF's role in international peace and stabilization initiatives as well as how it can function as a model that can be replicated in other urban settings.

To sum it up, the Nairobi Peace Actors Forum is a good example of a non-state, urban-based peacebuilding platform that has the potential to influence larger regional and international peace frameworks. The Forum employs participatory, context-sensitive and locally grounded approaches, as opposed to the frequently technocratic and externally driven models of peacebuilding that predominate international practice. Its full role and significance, however, have not yet been adequately investigated scientifically. This study aims to close that gap through assessing the initiatives through which non-state actors based in Nairobi, PAF, influence international peace and stabilization efforts. This is through reviewing the strategies deployed to establish legitimacy, control structural and political limitations, and incorporate community-led projects into larger peacebuilding frameworks. Thus, this research contributes to a better understanding of non-state actor platforms as important agents in the multi-level governance of peace and security.

### **2.2.5 Challenges and Opportunities Faced by Non-State Peace Actors in Advancing International Peace and Stability**

It is without doubt that non-state peace actors (NSPAs) have become critical players in today's peacebuilding environments, particularly in situations where formal state institutions have low legitimacy and protracted conflict. This is due to their closeness to impacted communities and their capacity to adapt to quickly changing conflict dynamics, these actors, ranging from; faith-based organizations (FBOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) to civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), occupy a special place in peace processes (Richmond, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2011).

These actors operate outside of conventional state-centric peacebuilding models, playing a vital role in post-conflict cohesion, intercommunal dialogue facilitation, and grassroots mediation. They can operate in an environment where state apparatus is either nonexistent, mistrusted, or intimately involved in the conflict because of their localized legitimacy (Lederach, 1997; Paffenholz, 2010). Non-state actors are therefore becoming more and more acknowledged for addressing important operational gaps in peacebuilding, especially, in instances where conventional diplomatic initiatives fall short in resolving historical and sociocultural grievances.

Series of obstacles, however, limit efficiency and sustainability of non-state actors' initiatives, despite their acknowledged contributions. Validity and acknowledgment question is one of the most persistent problems, since many cases, NSPAs are perceived as politically biased, outside influenced, or even subversive in many unstable or authoritarian environments. Richmond (2015), contends that this view not only complicates non-state actors' active participation in official peace talks but also renders them vulnerable to administrative roadblock, state persecution, or exclusion from important decision-making fora. NSPAs' legitimacy is further challenged by the delicate balancing act they must perform between satisfying international actors' procedural expectations and earning the trust of local populations.

Donor-induced mandates and financing unpredictability are a second significant obstacle. According to Barnes (2009), the operational hazards of relying too much on project-based, short-term donor support, which frequently places measurable results ahead of long-term transformation, forcing the NSPAs to conform their priorities to donor preferences, which might not accurately resonate with the local reality. These scenarios can potentially undermine local priorities, community ownership, and derail peacebuilding initiatives (Chandler, 2014). This can also induce selfish

competition among NSPAs for the shrinking funds, which could compromise cooperation and the overall effectiveness of peace initiatives.

Politicization of peace negotiations continues to complicate non-state actors' operational environment. State-based or non-state militias, political actors usually try to manipulate peace initiatives for their own strategic benefit (Mac Ginty, 2011). In these situations, NSPAs may become embroiled in political conflicts or be distrusted by opposing sides, undermining their objectivity and decreasing their efficacy. In some instances, actors operate in volatile and environments where their work is severely constrained by threats to their physical safety, such as harassment, kidnapping, or targeted assault (Autesserre, 2014).

There is need to for address the lacuna in studies on the dynamics of urban peacebuilding in African capital cities, for example, Nairobi, a metropolis that concurrently houses local communities, national institutions, regional authorities, and foreign agencies. However, much African studies have focused on rural, conflict-frontline situations. Mung'ou (2018), for instance, studied how non-state actors support women's peacebuilding in Mount Elgon, but this research was limited to rural setting and gendered experiences, offering little data on how these actors interact with formal international stabilization frameworks.

The Peace Actors Forum (PAF) in Nairobi, however, provides an intriguing but little-studied example of urban peacebuilding where local efforts converge with international priorities. To anticipate, prevent, and respond to conflict triggers both within and outside of Kenya, PAF brings together a wide coalition of players, NGOs, religious leaders and think tanks. Cooperation, policy discussions, and the incorporation of knowledge of local peace into national and international stabilization discourses are all made possible by this forum.

Despite its potential, the PAF is still not fully researched in scholarly works. Evidence about its ability to resolve fundamental operational conundrums is few. How PAF actors gain acceptance from international stakeholders as well as from local communities. What bureaucratic and political barriers PAF encounters when attempting to connect local peacebuilding with international stabilization initiatives. Without losing their local relevance, how they handle competing donor goals, resource competitiveness, and environmental concerns. As well as how much they impact, encourage, or contradict the official initiatives of organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union (AU), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), requires deep analyses.

NSPAs, such as PAF, have a good opportunity to advance inclusive and sustainable peace despite these obstacles. Their embeddedness in the community enables culturally relevant and contextually based conflict-sensitive techniques. According to scholars like Lederach (1997) and Doyle (2022), peace processes that are developed from the ground up and influenced by the goals and experiences of impacted communities have a higher chance of resulting in sustainable peace.

PAF platform is at a vantage position to act as a bridge between the demands of the community and elite peace efforts by optimizing its local legitimacy. Moreover, the platform can be very crucial in cross-border peacebuilding, early warning and response systems, and policy advocacy at many levels of governance. This thereby supports official diplomatic initiatives, addressing important gaps in the peace architecture and assisting in the development of more robust and inclusive frameworks for peacebuilding.

Although previous studies give a strong theoretical basis for understanding the roles of NSPAs, many of this research are either too general in scope or inappropriately contextualized to handle the unique aspects of urban-based peacebuilding in East African metropolises. Given Nairobi's distinct role as a center for politics, diplomacy, and civil society, a customized assessment of the ways in which non-state actors operate within and impact multi-level peace infrastructures is necessary.

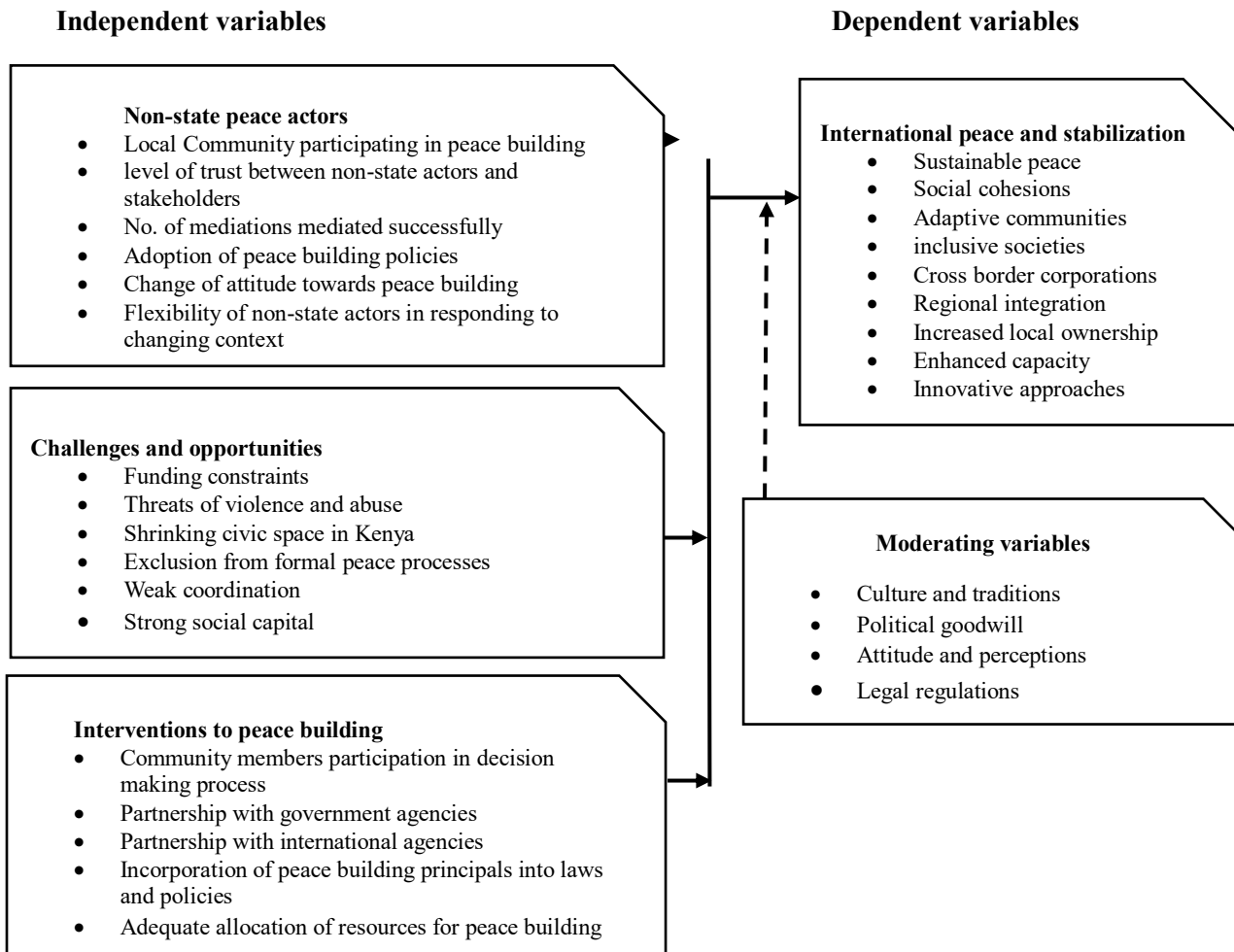
The literature on the Nairobi-based Peace Actors Forum (PAF) is lacking, particularly when it comes to how the platforms handles donor dependency, legitimacy politics, and its interactions with regional and global peace organizations. Additionally, little is known about how PAF actors affect formal multilateral peace frameworks or mediate between local goals and international stabilization agendas.

Therefore, by conducting a context-specific study on the potential and challenges facing Nairobi's non-state peace actors through the lenses of the Peace Actors Forum, this assessment seeks to close these important gaps, by providing fresh perspectives on how Nairobi PAF operates at the nexus of regional peacebuilding and international stabilization initiatives, thereby advancing both academic research and useful policy.

### 2.3 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 provides a structured overview of how independent, dependent and intervening variables relate with each other within the confines of the assessment of the effectiveness of non-state peace actors' initiatives in international peace, study. Independent variables influence or determine the study outcome and include; non-state peace actors, their resources and strategies and. Dependent variable on the other hand, is the outcome the study is assessing, which is the effectiveness of non-state peace actors' initiatives, and can be measured using indicators such as; social cohesions, sustainable peace, regional integration among others. Moderating variables are determined through culture, political-

will, perception and regulations to determine how they affect the strength and direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables.



**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Framework*

Source: Researcher’s conceptualization (2024)

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study used descriptive design to assess non-state peace actors’ initiatives in international peace and stabilization; a case of peace actors forum initiative in Nairobi, Kenya. According to Kothari (2008), descriptive design serves as a depiction of the existing situation. The findings analysis and interpretation were informed by the conflict transformation theory. Conflict transformation is well-suited for comprehending the long-term effects of non-state actors since it places an emphasis on resolving the underlying causes of conflict, repairing relationships, and promoting lasting peace. By connecting their activities to more general processes of conflict transformation and sustainable peace, the researcher used this theory to methodically assess the efficacy, difficulties, and potential of non-state peace players. This theory guarantees that the results are not just descriptive but also consistent with accepted conflict resolution and peacebuilding principles.

#### 3.2 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Purposive sampling and convenient sampling techniques were applied in the selection of the study participants. The sampling technique was adopted to ensure that only individuals with adequate knowledge of International Peace and Stabilization or those deemed fit to give relevant input are included in the study (Saunders et al., 2009). By using purposive sampling, the researcher was able to specifically choose people who are actively engaged in peace-related activities, guaranteeing that the data gathered is comprehensive and relevant. Purposive sampling made it certain that

the study offered significant and useful insights into the functions, strategies, and impacts of non-state peace players by specifically choosing participants with firsthand experience in peacebuilding.

Nairobi Non-Peace Actors Forum (PAF) has a total of 120 members out of which 7 are executives. The census survey method was used to target all the members of the Nairobi Non-Peace Actors Forum (PAF) as study respondents out of which 7 were executives, 10 were selected as participants in the pilot testing while the rest (103) were used as the study respondents. Therefore, study sample size was 103 respondents with 7 Key Informants (KI). Taherdoost (2016) stated that such a sample size has statistical power that is adequate for analyzing the study's goals.

The census method denotes a total enumeration of all the units of the population. As per Sankar (2020), it needs to be emphasized that when the universe is small, there is no use resorting to a sample survey. The census survey was preferred because the population size of the Nairobi non-state Peace Actors Forum members was manageable, ensuring that data could easily be collected from each member ensuring comprehensive and representative findings. In addition, the census eliminates sampling bias capturing complete diversity of the study respondents.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Once the tools and the defended proposal have been corrected, the updated version was shared with the supervisors for feedback before the researcher is approved. After the researcher got approval, he got an authorization letter from Mount Kenya University which he used to apply for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). A pilot study was conducted with 10 respondents before the main study.

To ensure that accurate and legitimate data is gathered, the instruments were adjusted following the pilot study. Research assistants were initially receiving training in data collection techniques before beginning the actual data collection phase of this project. They then received directions from the researcher on how to proceed with gathering data. The researcher administered data collection tools (questionnaires and interview guides) to the respondents with the assistance of research assistants. The questionnaires were picked up the same day or the day after that. In addition, interview guides were promptly answered in the researcher's presence. To find relevant and essential secondary data for the study, search engines, and the internet were utilized.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher prepared quantitative data for analysis using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. SPSS was deemed user-friendly because it could identify abnormal data points or data input errors, create frequency tables, and run most statistical tests that may be needed for the study. To draw conclusions about the study population for quantitative data from the sample data, the researcher employed descriptive inferential statistics in the analysis. The analyzed quantitative data displaying frequencies and percentiles are presented via graphs, charts, and frequency tables. The correlation between the research variables is measured using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

The text fragments were further compared by the researcher. To categorize the data, recurrent regularities and patterns in the data were found by comparing information units using the comparative approach. The data was then thematically summarized, coded using distinct identities, and fully analyzed by the researcher. Narrative analysis on the respondents' story during data collection was used to portray the data.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Response Rate

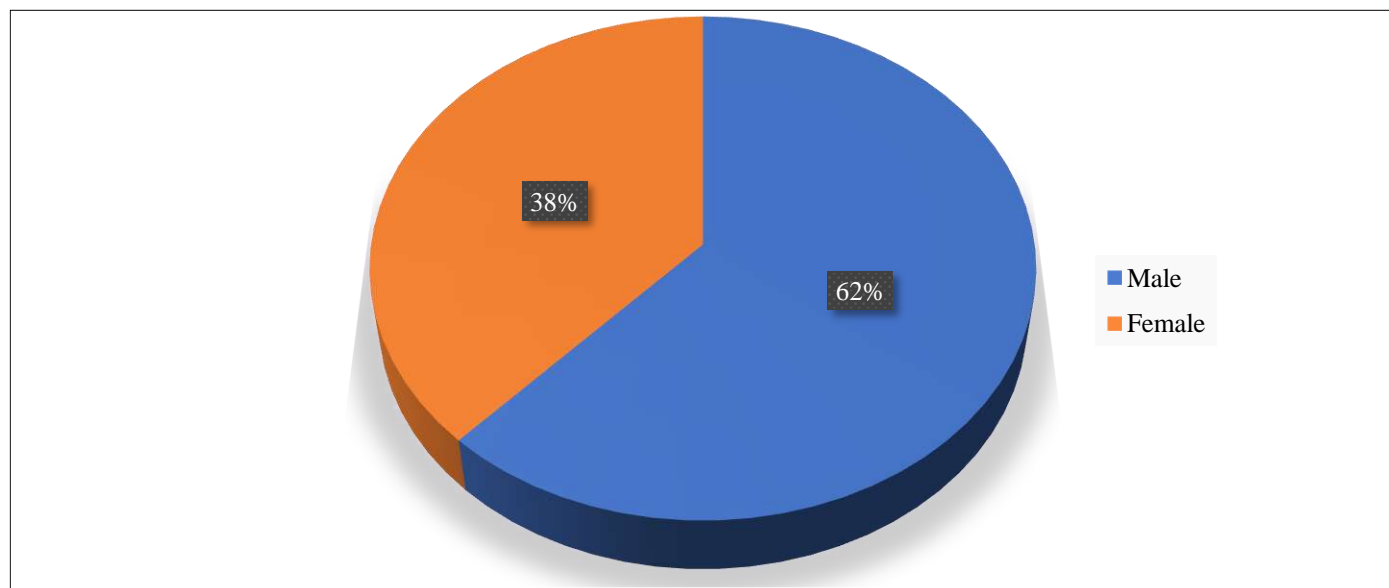
The study targeted 120 members of the Nairobi-based Peace Actors Forum Initiative (PAF) who were active. A total of 86 members participated in the study, additionally, 7 key informants and 2 focused group discussions (FGDs) with 8 and 7 participants, respectively, contributed to the qualitative data, thus, representing a 90.83% response rate. The 9.17% deficit was due to respondents who were unreachable or unavailable during the data collection period, as discussed in the previous literature that the 90% response rate provided adequate statistical power to analyse the study objectives, which placed the threshold at 80%, this is also supported by Taherdoost (2016). The excellent response rate was due to the well-organized nature of the platform, and the passion of the members to advancing peace.

In this study, the variables under review are independent, which are the initiatives by Peace Actors' Forum, and the dependent variable which is the peace and stabilization in Nairobi. Features of the initiatives include; the level of members' involvement in the peace initiatives, skillsets brought by the various members into the platform, members' commitment to the platform's ideals and vision, actors' perception on the effectiveness of their initiatives, as well as platform's strengths compared to the state actors.

**Table 1**  
*Study Response Rate*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Response through survey	87	72.5
Response through KII	7	5.83
Response through FGDs	15	12.50
Non-Response	11	9.17
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**4.1.1 Respondents’ Distribution by Gender (n=120)**

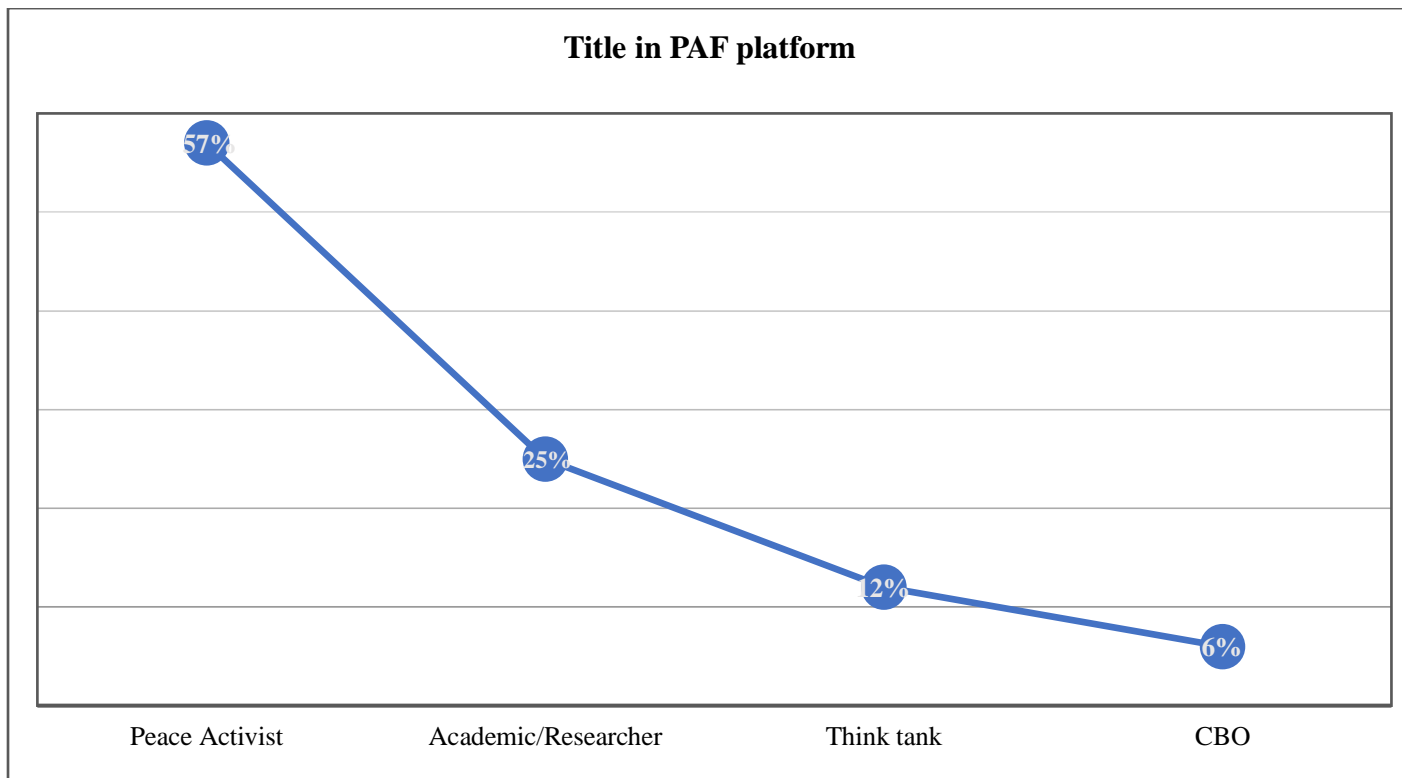


**Figure 1**  
*Respondents’ Distribution by Gender*

The findings, as illustrated in the Figure 1, indicate that majority of the members of the Nairobi Peace Actors Forum, (PAF), 62% of the participants were male while 38% were female. This could result in a gender imbalanced strategies and approaches to peacebuilding, although it might take long to achieve 50-50 gender equality in the platform, just like in any other institution in Africa and elsewhere, there is need for a more balanced gender inclusivity, to ensure that girls and women issues are effectively addressed. Appreciating that 38% is a considerable proportion, there is need to step up and ensure stronger female voice in the platform. The findings further reveal that 58% of the respondents had active memberships, while 42% were yet to renew. However, all respondents were members of the PAF WhatsApp group, ensuring they had access to relevant information and updates.

**4.1.2 Respondents’ Description in the PAF Platform**

The PAF Platform membership boasts of diverse members, each bringing in unique levels of support, knowledge, and expertise to the forum.

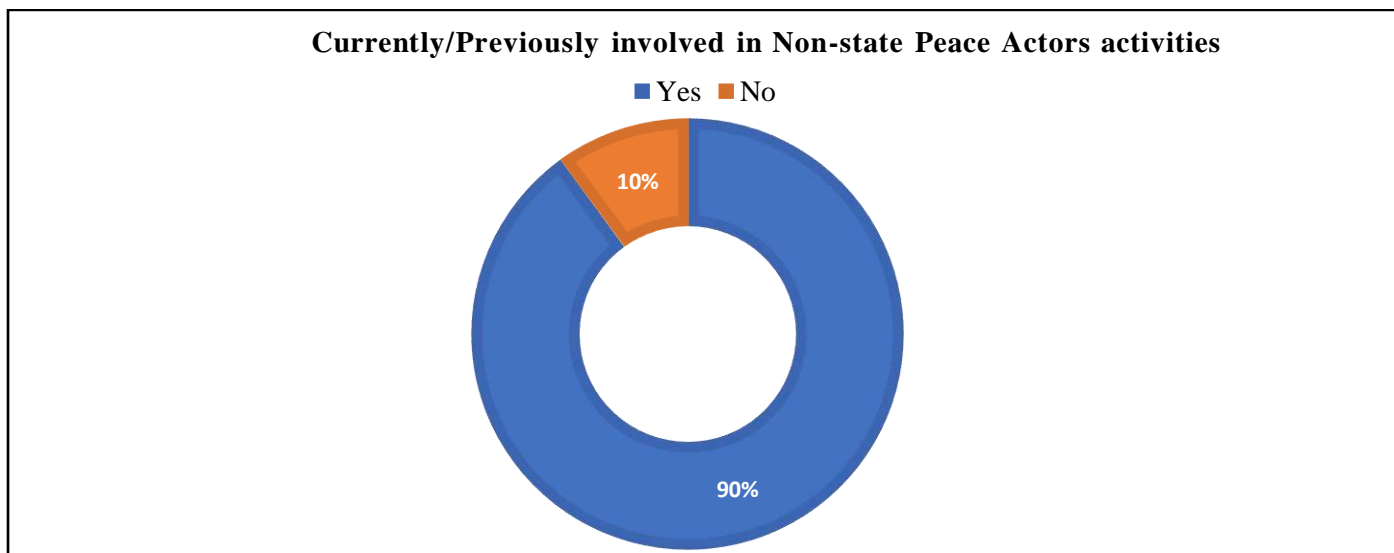


**Figure 2**  
*Description in the PAF Platform*

The data, as captured in the figure 2, shows that 57% of the respondents identified as peace activists, 25% as researchers, 12% as think tanks, and 6% as CBO representatives. These diverse roles indicate a broad range of expertise and experience within the forum, contributing not only to the quality of data collected, but also the quality and strategies employed by PAF to advance peace. The strong passion for peace blended with expertise could result in a well-thought out, community owned and driven peace processes that could drive peace sustainably beyond the national borders.

#### 4.1.3 Involvement in Non-State Actors’ Peace Activities

Involvement of members in non-state peace actors’ platform activities enabled them to have practical experiences from work. It empowered them to give recommendations based on exposure.



**Figure 3**  
*Involvement in Non-State Actors’ Peace Activities*

The findings indicate that 90% of the respondents had been involved in non-state peace missions, suggesting extensive practical experience. The 10% who had not participated are likely newer members of the forum.

#### 4.1.4 Effectiveness of Non-State Peace Actors' Forum Initiatives

Understanding how effective a peace building initiative is, offers great lessons for peace building. The first study objective sought to assess the effectiveness of the non-state peace actors' Forum initiatives in peace and stability.

**Table 2**

*Peace Roles in the Organization of Work*

Roles	Frequency	Percentage
Training, mobilization and mentorship	12	12.9
Advocacy for peaceful and transparent electoral processes	19	20.4
Coordinate peace caravan with USAID in Nakuru county.	13	14.0
Community leader peace brigade	4	4.3
Facilitating awareness	6	6.5
Peace builder/ mediator/ peace ambassador	10	10.8
Programs officer	12	12.9
American Friends Service Committee	3	3.3
UNDO As resource conflict monitor	3	3.3
I am a member of the Peace Actors Forum	6	6.5

Table 2 demonstrates that respondents performed diverse peace-related roles, including advocacy for peaceful elections, coordination of peace caravans, training, and mediation. This diversity highlights the broad range of activities undertaken by PAF members in promoting peace and stability.

**Table 3**

*Awareness of the Initiatives Undertaken by Non-State Peace Actors' Forum*

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Not aware	0	0.0
Not so much	2	2.0
Aware	22	24.0
Very aware	63	68.0

The data in Table 3 indicates that 68% of the respondents were very aware of the initiatives, while 24% were aware. However, 2% were not so much aware, suggesting a need for improved communication within the forum. This implied that the PAF platform is largely open, transparent and accountable to members, a key component that empowers it to be legitimate as this transparency easily scales down to the local community.

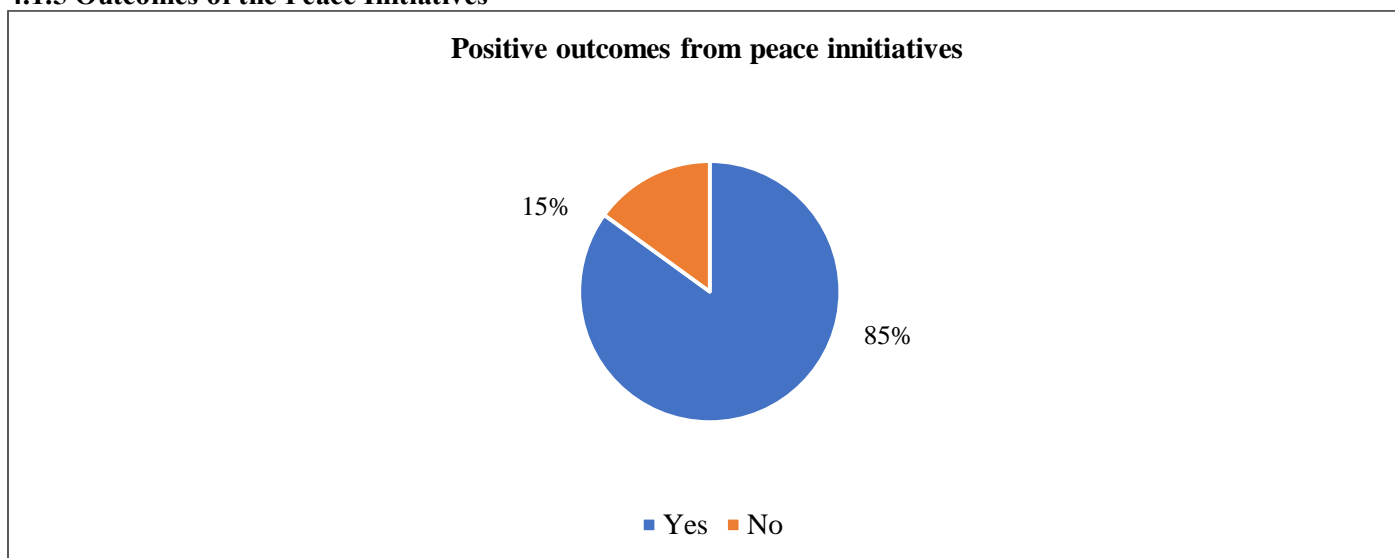
**Table 4**

*The Effectiveness of the Initiatives in Promoting Peace and Stability Locally*

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	54	58.0
Effective	30	32.0
Somewhat Effective	4	4.0
Unsure/Don't Know	1	1.0
Not Very Effective	2	2.0

The findings as captured in Table 4 reveal that 58% of the respondents found the initiatives very effective, and 32% found them effective. However, 2% found them not very effective. This imply that most members of the Forum are confident of their initiative to results into positive peace locally. This high-level confidence could stem from first hand testimonies from the ground and feedback from other higher-level stakeholders.

### 4.1.5 Outcomes of the Peace Initiatives



**Figure 3**  
*Outcomes of the Peace Initiatives*

The data shows that 85% of the respondents had witnessed positive outcomes, indicating the effectiveness of the peace initiatives. Key informants gave instances when the police adopting non-lethal approaches during demonstrations and successful peace interventions in Sondu. This imply that Nairobi Peace Actors Forum, has to a large extent succeeded ton entrenching soft peacebuilding approaches, which improves social cohesion, providing platforms for the local communities to own and drive peace processing in an inclusive design, thus promoting peace beyond the city boundaries.

**Table 5**  
*The Strengths of Non-State Peace Actors Compared to State Actors*

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Have more collaboration with international organizations	23	25.0
More experience in peace, democracy and justice	10	11.0
Have more access to marginalized groups	12	13.0
Pressuring the state to act	5	5.0
Offer sensitization and support to state actors.	8	9.0
Nonpartisan position/ neutral and impartial	17	7.0
Less bureaucratic compared to the state	11	12.0
Focus on sustainable development	13	14.0
Community trust and local legitimacy	21	23.0

The data, as captured in table 5, shows that members of the Nairobi Peace Actors’ Forum believe that they possess unique strengths in peacebuilding compared to the state actors. 25% believe they have better collaboration with international organizations, better experience in peacebuilding, 11%, close proximity to the local community, especially marginalized members of the society, 10%, these strengths the platform enjoy because of their size, clear and focused mandate, less bureaucratic policies and frameworks, as well as entirely soft approaches to peacebuilding, without perceived vested interests. These strengths enhance their ability to facilitate peace and stability. This points to a better understanding of the actors’ niche, which they can exploit to advance sustainable peace, through complementing government efforts.

### 4.2 Discussion

The findings from this study generally imply that Nairobi Peace Actors’ forum, (PAF) is to a larger extent in advancing peace and stability in Nairobi, through the platform’s initiatives. This can be asserted from the good response rate, where; gender equity, vibrant membership, wide range of skillset, transparency of running the platform’s affairs, members’ perception of effectiveness and belief on their strength, were highly affirmed, as confirmed by the discussed literature by Lederach (1997) and Doyle (2022), which underscores the importance of community inclusion in peace processes. Majority of the platform members, 85% confirmed having witness positive peace outcomes from their initiatives, while 90% believed their initiatives as forum were effective.

It is worth noting that this effectiveness can be compounded and maintained, by working closely with the state actors, to complete and bridge the gap left behind by the state approaches to peace processes. The platform also faces many challenges, just like any other non-state peace actors' forum, which and derail their operations if not well-handled, but at the same time provide an opportunity to invoke creativity and innovating ideas to better deliver sustainable and peace, beyond the Nairobi borders.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that non-state peace actors play a vital role in promoting peace and stability, which transcend beyond national borders and are critical actors in the peacebuilding process. As can be observed above the study has revealed that the Nairobi Peace Actors' Forum is a vibrant platform that despite having a weak women voice, brings on board a rich passion and expertise in peacebuilding that are recipe for sustainable peace. Vibrant membership, agility, transparency, belief in the strategies, close proximities to the affected communities, strategic location of the city, place the forum in a good position to effectively advance peace and stability beyond the city and national boundaries. This, despite facing few challenges such as, funding constraints, lack of enforcement authority, and weak coordination hinder their effectiveness, which again present learning opportunities. State actors, while possessing authority and stable funding, face bureaucratic constraints and internal conflicts. Effective collaboration between state and non-state actors is crucial for enhancing sustainable peace.

### 5.2 Recommendations

To improve the effectiveness of Non-State Peace Actors' Forum initiatives in Kenya, there is need for the Nairobi PAF to strengthen coordination and enhanced formalized collaboration mechanisms between non-state and state actors to align goals and reduce duplication. To add on, effectiveness requires enhanced sustainable funding, thus PAF needs to secure long-term funding through; partnerships with international organizations and other agencies, as well as utilizing available resources. Strengthening local capacities, in peacebuilding and diplomacy for community leaders, religious leaders, and youth are also recommended.

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