

## **MOMBASA CHURCH FORUM**

### **Report #K22**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The Mombasa Church Forum was created as a reaction to the constitutional referendum in Kenya. However, they realized that the church in Mombasa was facing unique issues that needed to be addressed by the leaders. Such issues were rooted in discrimination against the church because the county is thought to be a Muslim county, even though 55% of the residents are Christians. Churches have suffered terrorist attacks, obstacles in getting permits and having their youth being denied employment. The Mombasa Church Forum seeks to empower its member churches to occupy their county until Jesus returns by unifying the churches despite the diverse denominations, and to implement and promote good governance in the church and the state and economically empower its members. They have been able to unify over 300 pastors from different churches in Mombasa by showing them that the issues that they are facing affect the church as a whole. They have also been able to implement food governance by being involved in vetting candidates for elections and also having their members support each other and the youth in seeking employment.

#### **HISTORY**

According to the CEO, the Mombasa Church Forum was formed in 2010 immediately after the referendum of the Kenyan constitution. The church leaders had a particular vote on the referendum, so they had to assess whether they had had any impact on the society. They were trying to influence decisions in the referendum on the principles of Christian morality. Following that, there were many terrorists' attacks on churches on the coast, but there seemed to be no justice being carried out on behalf of the church. So on November 3, 2011, where over 300 pastors met from different churches in Mombasa. Before they got these pastors together, the Secretariat had a number of consultations from some of the key bishop in the area. These are the same bishops who form their coordination committee, which is the head of the organization. The Forum was created as a reaction to different issues that were affecting the church at the time such as the security of the churches, the lack of church involvement in decision making and the lack of Christian leaders in significant positions in the county.

According to the CEO of Mombasa Church Forum, there has been a lot of discrimination against Christians in the employment sector at the county and also in the municipal government system. The Forum recognized that the church had not been organized regarding involvement, security, employment opportunities and business opportunities. Their welfare in terms of security was under threat such as churches had problems getting building permit approvals because there was a general notion that Mombasa was primarily a Muslim town. The challenges brought the churches together because they realized that they needed one body where they would put theological differences aside so as to further the kingdom of God. The Forum was to be a place where they could articulate their issues and bring themselves together as one church. As a body, they have managed to bring together the key leaders in the area to discuss the areas of need. The secretariat painted a picture for the pastors of what the current state of affairs was like in Mombasa and the issues that they might or might not have been aware of. Such issues included,

but are not limited to, the issuing of various permits, and security and taxation matters. There was also a lack of employment for the youth who went to their churches. According to the CEO, unemployment hurts the church because the unemployed cannot give tithes and offerings when they have no money to give. With this rationale in mind of why they needed to work together, they were able to rally around a common cause.

Several significant milestones have been achieved. The Forum, as reported by the CEO, has been able to create the biggest conglomerate of churches in the county and even the country. Historically, there have been few single organizations that united different denominations, and so the Mombasa church Forum has been one of the frontrunners in this initiative. They have also managed to get two of their members into the executive, as cabinet members of Mombasa County. This safeguards the church from being marginalized when key decisions are being made, and ensures that the Forum is 'actually consulted on how they will be affected.' The churches also have been able to stop religious conflicts in the area by stopping plans for retaliation when their churches were attacked.

## **MISSION/VISION**

The Mombasa church Forum is still in its early stages, and so it has not been registered as a society or as a Non-Governmental Organization. Its CEO identified their vision as based on three pillars that seek to fulfill its mission. The core of this vision is unity in spiritual diversity, and the scope of this vision is countrywide. Even though it was founded in Mombasa, the Forum has been invited to give presentations in the nation's North Eastern province where the church has been facing many attacks because of the area's general insecurity but also because the majority of the population is not Christian. They have also been invited to speak in Nairobi, the nation's capital city 'because there is no organization in the country that has successfully united this many denominations under it,' as the CEO asserted. The Forum is looking to expand outside of Mombasa as time goes on but for now, they seek to focus on the issues in their home area.

The first pillar of the Forum is the spiritual pillar, where the churches seek to unify themselves despite their spiritual diversity. They have been building bridges that have not been historically there in the city of Mombasa amongst the churches. Most of these problems arise from rivalries that have come up among the churches. The CEO said that such issues include pastors who have been accused of stealing members from other churches, churches splitting and members following different pastors, sharp theological differences or pastors being accused of being involved in witchcraft. The Mombasa Church Forum has set to provide a climate where the churches can discuss such spiritual matters in a manner that does not have the church 'airing' its dirty linen in public. When issues arise amongst the members of the Forum, they settle them in their pastor's Forum or in their coordinating committee. The coordinating committee is the leadership in their pastor's Forum from where they derive their mandates.

The second pillar is good governance: a pillar which the CEO says is often mistaken for the Forum being involved in politics. Their involvement in politics only goes to the extent where they lobby for there to be a good and sound selection and vetting of candidates. They have observed that the church has churned out a number of politicians who come from very strong spiritual backgrounds, but once they enter the political arena, they 'forget' about the church. The

Forum only wishes to be involved in the levels of decision-making, which is one of the Forum's short-term objectives on issues of good governance. They want to ensure that the issues that affect the church are actually addressed and catered for. For example, the issue of demolition of church property would continue unless they helped elect good leaders who are well versed in the law and are empathetic to the churches' cause. However, even if there were good leaders in place, they would have very little impact on their cause if there were only a few. As the CEO pointed out, for example, in a municipal council of 33 members, about 2 of them would be Christians. So even if the issue of church demolition were to arise, there would be 'no' weight behind it since a majority decision is required on many issues. So the Forum wants to be involved, not by having pastors resigning from churches to run for office, but by having professionals from the churches involved in the community. The Forum, therefore, encourages such professionals to be in elective positions, service committees, or voluntary organizations so that the church is kept abreast on what is going on. According to the CEO's observations, the church has been very spiritual in terms of preaching about salvation and heaven but missed the mandate to occupy until Jesus returns. Some of the ways that he has seen that they need to occupy are in the area of social movements. Abortion is a very big problem in the country and is against the law. But there are many places that are known to provide the service and 'seem to be operating above the law.' The issue of homosexuality is a reality in Mombasa, and yet the nation's constitution has banned it. However, there were a couple of parades against homosexuality in the city, and no arrests were made, which 'tells the public that the parades were operating within the law.' The issue of good governance has been part of their pillar because the church has a stake in the issues of morality and can influence the law in that way. The Forum wants to help in finding leaders who are godly, God-fearing and have integrity. The CEO points to the times when Samuel was the prophet, and the Church and the state were working in harmony. According to the CEO, the prophet represented the church, and the state would represent the king. The king would never go into battle without consulting the church and 'this is the model' that the Forum is trying to fight for. In the past two decades, all the national committees that were formed in the nation had a position for the National Church Convention of Kenya or a representative from the church. But slowly this provision has been removed to make way for a representative for a human rights group. According to the CEO, this replacement of church leaders with secular civil rights leaders is what the Forum points to as the cause of having 'laws that are immoral and leaders who do not care about their constituents.' So the Forum made a practical decision as part of the pillar of governance that they were going to participate actively in the general elections, not by telling people who to vote for in the presidential election, but who to vote for at the country level because this is a person who will directly affect them. They came up with the Mombasa Church Forum 10 commandments of a good leader that outlined what their requirements were. Such qualities were: integrity, a development track record, character, and respect, availability for consultation, financial integrity, and moral integrity. They also did civic education where they encouraged people not to vote along ethnic or gender or political party lines. They even organized a vetting session with governor aspirants where the candidates were asked to demonstrate their track record, what they were going to do for Mombasa, how they were going to unify the people against religious attacks, and how they were going to cater for the different socio-economic classes. They vetted the candidates and gave their opinions to the people and the MP that they back Nyali in the northern part of Coast, who was one of the winners. He is a Catholic with a good standing in the community.

The third pillar is the economic empowerment of the church members. Apart from spiritual nourishment, the Forum feels that the church has a responsibility to ensure that its members are empowered economically. This pillar, the CEO said, is linked with good governance because the first key step in ensuring economic empowerment is ensuring that the environment for business is a positive one. So the church is involved in good governance not only regarding the elections but also throughout the entire process. Whenever the leaders or issues are being discussed, the Forum ensures that the church participates so that the decision will be conducive to economic empowerment for business to prevail. Additionally, the Forum had felt that their members were being discriminated against regarding employment opportunities, so they have tried to break that cycle with the youth. The Forum wants to bring more of the church into leadership positions so that they will be able to create and advocate for employment opportunities for the youth. It is an ongoing process, and they have several leaders who are doing everything in their power to ensure that when employment or business opportunities arise there will be a regional balance, meaning every area is catered for, but also every age group is also catered for. In the past, as pointed out by the CEO, managers of companies have been 'importing' their own people from home constituencies. Now that the government has put aside funds to be dispersed to the youth and members of the county for business opportunities, they want to make it their task to make sure that there are no marginalized groups. The Forum has started putting together proposals for sustainable projects but have not implemented them fully because the Forum is not yet legally registered.

## **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WITH SIMILAR FOCUS/MISSION**

Skipped.

## **CURRENT LEADER**

The CEO is Stanley Prince Muchai, and he has been the CEO since the Forum's inception. He graduated from Moi University School of Law in 2010. He is a lawyer by profession but has yet to attain his diploma, which he says he will attain in 2014. He has also worked in the tourism industry in two hotels: Titanic and Edenrock as the regional manager and the marketing assistant respectively. Despite maintaining full-time employment status, he has been serving as the CEO of the Forum. His work has been to put together the secretariat to ensure that they are able to support the clergy who are members of the coordination committee. The Forum in terms of revenue supports the secretariat, and so the staff has been severely limited. The office comprises the CEO and his office assistant and a number of volunteers. So everything that they have achieved so far has been with a very small staff; so they are sure they will achieve more once they formalize the Forum. According to the CEO, his strengths are: he is a good communicator and a thinker, 'especially with innovation.' Given their lack of resources, he said that their achievements have been great because of their innovation in bringing the clergy leaders together. Individuals called all the pastors who were gathered at the Forum: the CEO and his colleague who is now the minister for tourism in Mombasa County. They called them together and gave a presentation and outlined the issues. They were able to bring all the pastors together and managed to support the secretariat through the clergy. There has been no external source of funding other than what they themselves have put forth in terms of time and resources to the Church Forum. Another strength, according to the CEO, is that they have been able to perform

their duties while still holding formal employment. Another strength is the ability to unite the diverse players in the Christian act. The CEO observed that it was a 'balancing act' in the initial stages because it had never happened before that they had a Catholic and an evangelical in the same organization, according to his knowledge.

## **BOARD STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION**

The Forum has no board, but their leadership organ is called the coordination committee, which is their steering committee. Bishop Wilfred Lai, who is the senior bishop at Jesus Celebration Center Ministries International, chairs the committee. He is Kamba so he represents the Eastern part of Kenya and he is also an evangelical. The vice chairman is Bishop Lawrence Dena, who comes from the Anglican Church of Kenya and is also the chairperson of National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) in Coast Province and a lecturer at Daystar University. His strengths are that he has 'a lot of academic input' that keeps the Forum updated and that he represents an entire brigade of 27 different Christian denominations. He is also a leader in the coastal communities as a Mijikenda, which is very important to the Forum. There is only one lady on the committee, and as the CEO notes, the Forum is not yet constitutionally compliant since they need to have one more lady in the committee. The one lady in the committee is Rahab Kuria, and she serves as the Forum's treasurer. She pastors an evangelical church, and she is one of the women clergy leaders in Mombasa. She represents the 'women's angle in the committee.' The outgoing secretary of the committee is the former PCEA moderator, Reverend Michael Kimani, who represents the Presbyterian Church in the coast province. Father Wilbert Lago, who is the vicar general, represents the Catholic Church, second only to the Archbishop. Major Nako represents the Salvation Army from the Western part of Kenya. Bishop Tom Arati of the Mombasa Pentecostal Church is also on the committee, and he is Kisii, representing Nyanza province. He is also the chairman of the Mombasa Pastor's Fellowship and is a member of the National Evangelical Alliance of Kenya. They also have Bishop Kinoga from Bible Restoration Ministries, who is one of the directors at Coast Inter-faith Council of Clerics (CICC) and he is also a member of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya. Reverend Anyendo of Nyali Baptist who is the CEO of CICC is also on the coordination committee. The CEO and the chairman of the Christian Foundation of Kenya, Anthony Naya also attends the committee meetings.

From the committee, they have zonal structures that coordinate the activities on a smaller level. They have a structure in the western part of Mombasa, which is Chagamwe and Njoo constituencies. They also have zonal committees in Likoni, the island (Mvita), and in the north (Kisauni and Nyali.) These committees can coordinate the activities at the zonal level and report to the coordination committee.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & LEADERSHIP**

To Be Put In Writing.

## **BOARD AND STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

The Forum derives its mandate from the pastors who are members, and it is from this membership that the coordination committee and staff members are selected. The committee

members are appointed by the Pastor's Forum and they are given the mandate to run the Forum for that period of time until the Forum decides otherwise. The secretariat is approved by the coordination committee, but the criteria are not explicit according to the CEO.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

The 'first stakeholder' that they work with is the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), which is also a member of the Mombasa Church Forum. They have a very established leadership structure and programs of activities such as corporate social responsibilities. Whenever the Forum has activities pertaining to peace and conflict resolution programs, they have been able to work closely with the NCCCK because NCCCK is a registered, and they have a series of activities where the Forum can offer them support. The CEO said that the two need each other in conducting the activities.

Other stakeholders are those outside the Church, namely: the Muslim community, especially after the Aboud Rogo riots. Aboud was a controversial sheik that was shot down on the Malindi-Mombasa highway outside a hotel, and this led to churches being attacked by Muslim youth. They were able to sit down at that time with the Muslims within the interfaith council because the council brings together Muslims, Hindus, and Christians. They were able to consult with them and also work with the Council teacher of Kenya Brigade and the Supreme Alliance for Kenyan Muslims. They included the Muslim youth, the business community and the chamber of commerce, which is currently chaired by a believer. All of this was to restore peace in the community and quell the hostilities that had arisen from the incident.

The tourism industry is also a stakeholder because the Forum has a lot of members who work in that sector, particularly the Kenya Association of Housekeeper and Caterers. They have had leaders from this industry that have been able to support them in terms of their CSR activities and they are very thankful for that.

They also work with leaders in the business sector who offer mentorship in the different institutions that they are placed in. They have what they call the Regional Business Association, which brings together business associations in the Coast Province. They have been able to connect them as a church Forum and the Revenue Benefit Authority to provide internship opportunities for the youth in their churches.

Lastly, there is the security apparatus, which they consult when they have issues as a Forum. This usually includes the County Commissioner. There were also the outgoing Provincial Commissioners who they have worked with whenever they have had a security crisis as a church Forum. They can do this because they represent a certain constituency. So they have the power to bring the issues to the table and form a solution together.

## **FINANCES & OTHER RESOURCES**

Mombasa Church Forum is not registered so as such they are not able to receive funds from external sources. Currently, the Forum has been supporting itself financially. The members have been giving monthly subscriptions or free will offerings, which are being channeled towards the

secretariat. They do keep books of account, which are available for inspection or audit upon members' request, but they have not had any external audits of the same because the accounts are not registered. Income to the secretariat has been coming in two ways: membership subscriptions and freewill offerings. They have not had year-to-year budgets but what they have been doing is whenever there has been a need for one, they create it. The office of the Secretariat is not full time, and even the CEO does not work there full time. He just offers my support services whenever there are activities that are ongoing; so because they are not full-time employees as such, they do not get salaries. They volunteer their services, so the budgets are only program specific. Whenever they have a particular program that they are holding, that is when they prepare the budget, and revenue is raised on a need basis. The budget is presented to the members of the Forum where they are told what the project is and how much it will cost, and members are able to meet the budget at that particular time.

## **PARTNERSHIPS/LINKS**

Apart from their stakeholders, they have also worked with the Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS) to provide mentorship to the youth graduating from high school and university. Additionally, they work with the Kenya Secondary Schools Fellowship (KSSF) and they provide mentorship to the high school students and throughout their university years too as they look for internship opportunities. The professionals who work in the Mombasa Church Forum work with them to give career guidance. In return, KSSF provides manpower whenever the Forum needs volunteers to run their activities in areas such as publicity or logistics.

## **SWOT**

According to the Forum's CEO, their greatest strength is their ability to unite the diverse denominations. It is something that no other organization in the county or even in the country has been able to do, as the CEO claimed. Mombasa is one of the few places where they can call one organization, and different denominations will be adequately represented. In lieu of the same diversity that also translates to numerical representation; they represent the biggest number of churches. Therefore, they also represent the biggest constituency of Christians in the County. They are the largest group of Christians, and it has given them official recognition. In the incident of the assassination of the sheik, they were called as the Mombasa Church Forum because their churches were being attacked and the Muslims and the security apparatus called upon the Forum. They wanted to determine what the Forum's position was because they were worried that the churches would reciprocate by instigating attacks throughout the county. But they were able to moderate the peace during that period. The Mombasa Church Forum attended the meetings and provided leadership by strongly condemning the attacks but also reconciling with their Muslim brothers, and the violence was stopped. Those who were trying to seek to bring retaliation, the Forum managed to put them down, and normalcy was restored to the town. They give glory to God for that because when such incidents occur, business sharply declines in the area. At that time, there were travel advisories from other countries that discouraged foreigners from going to Mombasa, which was not good for business. Mombasa depends on tourism, so every time there is violence in Mombasa, whether it is from terrorism or whether it is religiously influenced or it is just normal crime, it is not good for business, and, therefore, businesses lose. So one of their

achievements is that they were able to garner recognition in the county. As Mombasa Church Forum, they were able to give a different opinion and a different face to the county. In the past, the county has only had one type of representation; it was never in line with the church. But in these past general elections, Mombasa Church Forum was able to ensure that there was quite able representation by involving everyone. Even though the governor who won the election was Muslim, he stood before a room full of bishops and he was able to say what it is he is going to be able to do for the churches, for the Muslims, and for everybody, and to bring the two communities together. That was another strength that they feel they were able to exhibit because of their unique position with their involvement as a church: they were able to represent alternative views, and the CEO saw this as a credit to the Forum.

According to the CEO, the first weakness they have to address is that the Forum is an ongoing process and has not reached its full capacity. There are over 1,000 churches in Mombasa, but not all of them have come on board the Church Forum. So every day they are still reaching out to these other churches through the secretariat and through the clergy leaders who are already members of the Forum. They believe that if they can become stronger, with 1000 churches in one organization, there's nothing they cannot do to influence positively the county. As an example, the Forum will become a powerful voice, and it will become an opinion leader in the county and be able to influence legislation. Whenever there are issues of concern, the leaders who are asked for their opinion are members of the Forum. So they see as a point of weakness that they have not been able to represent all the Christians and all the church leaders in Mombasa though they are reaching out to them. Secondly, there is the issue of registration, which is a technical issue that has hampered their expansion. Because of their non-registration, they have not been able to formalize their activities and operate formal accounts, thus not being able to expand their scope of influence.

The opportunities that the Forum has come from their objectives. The opportunities are available as the county implements a devolution of governance as is happening in other counties in Kenya. There are a lot of employment opportunities available to the people in the county; so they need to look out and ensure that their members in their churches 'do not sit idle as the government is dispersing funds for the youth to be able to do business.' So regarding economic empowerment, there are lots of opportunities that are available and the Forum is hoping that they will be able to maximize the same. There is legislation that is going to be enacted at the county level: issues to do with tourism and other legislations. The Mombasa Church Forum has an opportunity to be able to mold or influence the draft of the legislation as an interest-specific group because they have to be consulted. The CEO felt that it would be very unfortunate for the area if legislation is drafted in the county and the largest representative of the churches is not consulted. However, the CEO thought that this will not happen because two of their members are members of the cabinet at the county level: Mr. Njaramba, who is the tourism minister and Mr. Tandei who is the minister for education. They know when it comes to implementation of legislation or of anything that involves the county, the Church Forum will have an opportunity to give its input, which is what they have been advocating for. They want to be consulted when decisions are being made.

Their threats stem from internal jealousy or negative competition in the church. According to the CEO of the Forum, they are one body; so whenever one person is doing something, it is



good that they all support it. Some people see what the Mombasa Church Forum is doing as a threat to their own church or ministry. Others also see that the activities of the Church Forum are a threat and begin dividing the Forum by introducing denominational differences. Still others have seen what the Mombasa Church Forum is doing and sought to duplicate it: as in the case where they have formed Mombasa Church County Forum. This would be just the same thing with a different name so that they can appear successful and that they are doing the same thing as the Forum is doing. For example, they had issues when they were in the process of trying to vet candidates, and were calling church leaders to vet candidates. They would find that other church leaders have gone elsewhere trying to do the same thing without the consent of the leadership of the Forum. These challenges have been there since they began; but they are praying that the Lord will deliver them out of that lack of maturity because it is a challenge, as the CEO narrated.

## **TRAINING/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

The staff in the Mombasa church Forum is all clergy leaders, and they have not been offered any formal training. But they do see that there is a need for leadership training, and there are a lot of organizations that are doing that in the area. However, they face the challenge of finances if they are to get their staff trained. They would like to organize ongoing leadership training so that their clergy leaders are kept abreast on the issues that are happening. They also want to be involved in capacity building because they have found clergy leaders who are very good with the Bible but do not understand what else is happening in the secular world. When they were debating the new Kenyan constitution, a lot of church leaders were opposing the constitution. However, when they were asked to be specific about what was wrong with it, they did not have a response. There is, therefore, an urgent need for capacity building, and any support that can be offered by institutions or any other organization will be a welcome relief. Most of their members do not have any formal training in leadership, and they are just volunteering their efforts as clergy leaders or as members of the church.

## **PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

They have an emailing list and a Facebook page, so they are active on social media. They have been using these two mediums as a communication platform whenever they have their activities. They would like to have a monthly magazine, but are not able to do that due to lack of finances. “We would like to do it as soon as the funds are available for it.” They also would like to find an editor who can run an electronic magazine for the Mombasa Church Forum. They feel that it will enable them to better inform churches, and also potentially recruit more churches. They do have some printed information such as bulletins and pamphlets as part of the programs that they conduct. When they are doing civic education on a particular topic, they create fliers, pamphlets, and booklets and distribute them.

## **FUTURE**

The Mombasa Church Forum has a strategic plan, but they did not share it with the interviewer.

As for sustainability, the ‘Mombasa Church Forum is here to stay,’ according to the CEO. It might have arisen as a reaction to the times, but the issues that have pervaded the church in Mombasa are deeper and vast, and they cannot be handled in a matter of months. They are hoping to get registered so that they can have officials elected by the people and have a proper mandate that they are able to transact as a registered entity. They are looking forward to the opportunities that will arise out of formalizing the Forum. They will be able to seek external sources of funds and build wider networks with churches even outside of the county. They are also looking forward to having a formal office with a full-time Secretariat so that they can be able to coordinate the affairs of the Forum properly. The e-magazine that they are working on will keep them abreast of issues affecting the church and also make sure that communication is carried to other members of the church Forum and also to those outside of the Forum.

## **REPORT PREPARATION INFORMATION**

This report was prepared by Peninah Kimiri and David Ngaruiya. Stanley Prince was interviewed by David Ngaruiya on Aug 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013.