

4. “African Potentials” for Conflict Mitigation in and around Kenya

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(Abstract by the author)

“African potentials” are seen in peoples’ abilities to maintain positive individual relationships and networks that can be used to foment peace. These potentials may come from within, but may also include those from outside that have been accepted and have been successful in creating peace. Customary governance institutions (CGIs) still have considerable influence in some parts of Africa where modern public administration and legal institutions are weak or ineffective, or in areas where the state has no presence. CGI structures are rooted in the culture and history of African people and are, in one way or another, exceptional to each community. The customary governance system is still strong amongst the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, where it plays an important role in collective decision making about land resource management, mobility, conflict, security and domestic issues. Vast underdeveloped expanses of the North Rift have few police posts or courts and states have little capacity to exercise authority, hence communities rely on informal institutions to protect and adjudicate, and for conflict management and justice (Menkhause, 2005). This work considers the strengths and limitations of CGIs in Kenya, and their role as “African potentials”.