# CHALLENGES FACING USHAHIDI PLATFORM AS A PROACTIVE ACTOR IN CONFLICT PREVENTION IN KENYA SINCE 2007

**Dr. Njeru Abraham Kirea.**
Multimedia University of Kenya, Kenya
**Dr. Bernard Malakwen.**
Moi University, Kenya

Full Length Research

## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to find out challenges facing Ushahidi platform as a proactive actor in conflict prevention in Kenya since 2007. The paradigm that was found suitable for this study is Pragmatism. The research method was a correlational design utilizing cross-sectional survey methodology and included a number of survey instruments. Interviews, focus groups, and an examination of the Ushahidi platform's content were all used to gather data for this investigation. The researcher used coding and matrix construction to carefully arrange the data acquired in order to provide structure, order, and explanation. Once all the data was categorized, it was compared and contrasted to the literature review. Using social media as a conflict-prevention tool, the research found that the absence of ethical standards and professionalism for users is a key weakness. Because it is so liberal, it may be used to disseminate misinformation and inaccurate facts that might harm peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Some users have already begun to doubt the reliability of the information that is shared on social media as a result of this.

**Key Words:** Conflict prevention, Social media, Ethical standards, Peacebuilding

## INTRODUCTION

According to Saila (2012), most Kenyans did not have internet access as they have now, not even via mobile phones as they do now, in late 2007 and early 2008. As a result, those who were online saw an increase in activity. Many people have suffered from the consequences of unrestrained speech, yet others have used their blogs and social media accounts to save lives. Because of this intertextuality, SMS texts have been included in the new media category (Iraki, 2010). For Mäkinen and Kuira, the internet was utilized as a platform for "biased information, tribal biases, and hate speech" in addition to being a "alternative medium" for citizen contact. Digitally networked tools 'caused both predatory conduct, such as ethnic-based mob violence, and civic activity, such as citizen journalism and human rights movements,' they write. (Goldstein and Rotich, 2009).

As stated by Wa-Mungai, there was a significant intertextuality between the source of information and the tools employed to transmit that knowledge. In order to fit inside SMS and Twitter accounts, mass e-mails were trimmed down and laced with misinformation. Cyberspace-based conversations were also nourished by press rumor and disinformation, according to Wa Mungai's analysis (Wa-Mungai 2010). People who engaged in these debates were overwhelmingly supportive of Raila Odinga and voiced their dismay at the 'failure of democracy.'

No more Facebook FB zero (a free program) and the widespread use of mobile devices have boosted the number of social media users, particularly among the urban poor. It's as a consequence of this that when Kenyans speak about social media they mostly refer to Facebook and Twitter, blogs, and Whatsup. Mobile phones, which are ubiquitous among Kenya's young, make it easy for them to stay connected on social media.

In addition, a variety of crisis mapping tools, such as Ushahidi and the Uwuiano peace platform, are being developed using ICT. These are platforms for crisis management, which are short-term projects in conflict management. When discussing the influence of social media on politics, it's important to remember that most of the political debates take place on social media. ICTs' influence on society, however, is doubted by most scholars, who point to a number of potential stumbling blocks. There is also a growing number of politicians that have Facebook or Twitter accounts, as well as blogs that they utilize for their campaigns. It seems that the government is taking internet activism seriously and taking efforts to monitor information online. State machinery has signaled the potential for a recurrence of post-election violence and ethnic instigation, which some of the audience members are aware of and are concerned about. In spite of this, there has been a call for self-censorship from people who publish stuff online that is politically sensitive.

Since the focus has been on using ICTs for humanitarian relief and development, a paradigm change is needed to look at ICTs as a tool for all kinds of human endeavors. A conflict-prevention atmosphere may be created when social media platforms are designed to promote peace and coexistence. This new perspective will throw light on issues that previous studies have failed to address.

Stogyte (2013) studied the Ushahidi platform, a crisis communication ICT, in order to understand how cultural values of technology developers influence the design of crisis communication ICTs. Ushahidi's design represents the cultural values of its creators via the capabilities included in it, a flexible interface design (which enables the platform to be adapted to varied requirements through adjustable choices), and numerous digital items that may be used in the platform. As a result, open-source software developers are generally aware of the context of a user since they are motivated by the aims that their product is supposed to fulfill or serve. As with Ushahidi, these objectives represent the shared values and beliefs of the whole community.

Most elected officials now have Facebook or Twitter accounts, as well as campaign blogs, and are actively using these tools in their campaigns. It seems that the government is taking internet activism seriously and taking efforts to monitor information online. They've seen this, and some of them worry that the state apparatus has hinted at the likelihood of further post-election violence and incitement to ethnic tensions (Sid, 2010). In spite of this, there has been a call for self-censorship from people who publish stuff online that is politically sensitive. MP hon. Moses Kuria of Gatundu South has been accused of posting hate speech on social media, notably via a Facebook account that claims to be his.

Hon. Kaluma's decision not to accept the declaration made by Kuria is a hateful combination of politics and ethnicity. However, one response, Kaberia Laikanya "kuria u, are in the same league as Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and the Islamic state. This person is a "radical tribesman". By equating Islam with terrorism, this speech adds fuel to the fire of religious bigotry. Between September 4, 2014, and August 23, 2015, when the research utilized the post to draw conclusions about how hate speech spreads, 265 people 'shared' and 461 people 'liked' it on social media. This indicates that at least 1,000 people saw this post. Mutahi Ngunyi, a political analyst on Twitter, is another noteworthy social media user to post hateful content: In light of the suspected corruption in the Ministry of Devolution and Planning's National Youth Service (NYS) department in 2015, Mutahi's statements came amid a period of political turmoil. Raila Odinga as the head of the opposition was outspoken in calling for the resignation of the then Cabinet Secretary in the docket. There is a mixture of religious, political, and ethnic animosity in the postings above.

The former Nairobi mayor George Aladwa is reported to have shouted comments branded vile in Kenya's Kibera slum at an opposition rally during the Kenya's Mashujaa day festivities on the 20th October 2015. In the wake of his death, Kenyans went to social media to quote him and even post videos of him. There is a good illustration of this in the case of Collins Okello, who allegedly cited a piece of information that was deemed to be anti-Semitic and even published it to YouTube. Kenyan political ethnicity and the speaker's milieu at the time may have led him to use 'wao' to refer to Kikuyu or Kalenjins in this context.

PEV experiences in Kenya paved the basis for the approval of UNSCR 1325 in Kenya. Ex-first lady Graca Machel pushed civil society organizations to submit an open letter to the African Union mediation team headed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan after the PEV. Issues that were important to women during the PEV were addressed by the Kenya Women's Consultative Group (KWCG). An important suggestion in the memorandum delivered on January 25th, 2008 was for Kenya to embrace UNSCR 1325. Women's engagement in decision-making processes is claimed to be the essential missing link that might help to conflict prevention and ensure that women are included as equal partners in their protection against GBV and other types of violation. When this memorandum was presented, the country's desire and commitment to execute UNSCR 1325 was revitalized.

It was via a mutually beneficial twinning process that Kenya and Finland started working together to produce a National Plan of Action on UNSCR 1325. This partnership would allow the global south and north to learn from one another. On the recommendation of that ministry, which is charged with monitoring the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in member states, UN Women was tasked with drafting a Kenya National Action Plan (KNAP) and submitting it to the National Gender and Equality Commission for review and approval.

KNAP is predicated on the four UNSCR 1325 pillars, namely, prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery. Because it is grounded on a human security paradigm, it stands apart from the others. The government and other stakeholders in Kenya are making an

attempt to deal with the underlying causes of economic and social problems related to peace and security. Gender equality and women's involvement and leadership in public affairs at all levels are at the heart of the KNAP's overarching mission to integrate the UNSCR 1325 into national development, diplomacy, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace-building initiatives. With the three challenges to successful action plans in mind, the Kenyan National Action Plan has recommended a separate UNSCR 1325 coordination unit inside a ministry that would mainstream the Resolution's strategies and plans throughout multiple government entities.

The proposal faces a major obstacle because of the issue of placement. Gender and Children's Affairs was once responsible for hosting it; it has now been taken over by the Ministry of Social Development. After further consultations with National Security Council, the organ responsible for making security decisions in the government of Kenya and various stakeholders, it was decided that the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government would host the plan given that it adopts a human security framework, which emphasizes equal protection of individual citizens and endeavors to better understand and address the root causes of socio-economic and political inequalities around peace and security issues faced by women. Nevertheless, after the 2013 elections, the KNAP needed to be updated to reflect the new government's goals and organizational structures (devolved). The strategy is in line with Kenya's developing security goals, the MTP II, Vision 2030, and the government structure. Implementation of action plans has been most effective in Western nations such as Finland when hosted by either of the two ministries.

Kenya has yet to confront the stakeholder involvement challenge. Since the very beginning of the process, the government has welcomed participation from national and regional civil society groups, who have served as both committee members and specialists. Kenya's national consultative process chronicled the actions of civil society groups that were aimed at increasing the collaboration between the government and the civil society in Kenya in order to avoid violent disputes from escalating. The effective implementation of KNAP during Kenya's 2010 referendum on the Constitution may be attributed to the successful implementation of KNAP.

Ushahidi and Uwiano platforms, with the help of UN agencies and other partners, conducted major conflict prevention work before to Kenya's 2010 vote on the country's constitution. They arrived at a time when there was real concern and evidence of increased political grandstanding and violence. Following the post-election violence in 2008, the Ushahidi platform (Swahili for "witness" or "testimony") was first developed for humanitarian early warning and response. Web and mobile phone-based reports are collected using crowd-sourced methodologies. Maps of violence and peace attempts in Kenya are provided by these reports. To aid civil society groups (CSOs) in collaborating and exchanging information, the Ushahidi platform has been a great assistance. An organization known as Uwiano (Kiswahili for 'cohesion') was founded before to Kenya's 2010 constitutional vote. Kenya and international organizations, such as the Directorate of Peacebuilding and Conflict

Management, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), Peace Net Kenya, and the United Nations Development Program in Kenya, came up with the idea for the project.. As a result, the platform set up a mechanism for gathering current information on tensions, hate speech, incitements, threats, and violence throughout Kenya and relaying it to security agencies and local peace structures best suited to carry out appropriate steps, including mediated peacemaking. Advocates for peace received specialized training in conflict resolution. The government, local communities, local civil society, and religious organizations, as well as foreign development partners, all lent their support to this collaborative effort.

## Theories of Conflict Management

Marx initially proposed the concept of conflict theory in 1996, arguing that society is riven by conflict over dwindling resources. The theory of conflict states that dominance and power are the means through which social order is maintained (rather than consensus and conformity). Those in positions of power and money, according to conflict theory, want to maintain their position by whatever means necessary, especially through repressing the weak and helpless. According to conflict theory, people and organizations in society are motivated to maximize their own interests.

Karl Marx, Georg Simmel, and Otto Coser were the three sociologists who developed this idea. In response to the structural functionalism theory, it was created as an alternative theory (Ritzer, 1996). Criticizing the broad social-political system or in any other way undermining structural functionalism and ideological conservatism, conflict theory is a sociological approach that focuses on the social, political or material imbalance among social groups. When parties, organizations, or nations have conflicting interests, it is typically because their aims are irreconcilable or diametrically opposed. In order to achieve peace and harmony, this idea holds that the society as a whole is riddled with conflicts that must be resolved.

Many societal events, including wars, revolutions, poverty, prejudice, and domestic violence have been explained using conflict theory. It attributes most of the major advancements in human history, like as democracy and civil liberties, to capitalists' efforts to control the populace (as opposed to a desire for social order). Concepts such as social inequality, resource distribution, and class-based conflict are at the core of conflict theory.

Conflict theory's fundamental premises may explain a wide range of historical social disputes. It is widely held that conflict in society is the driving force behind social change and progress.

Marx's conflict theory centered on the struggle between two basic classes. Members of the same social class have common interests and a degree of property ownership. The bourgeoisie, as defined by Marx, is a class of individuals who control the bulk of the nation's

wealth and power. In contrast, the proletariat consists of persons who are deemed to be working-class or impoverished.

Mills, C. Wright, is widely regarded as the originator of conflict theory. According to Mills, conflict between individuals with diverse perspectives, attitudes, interests, and resources is the primary means by which social institutions are formed. In turn, these institutions and the uneven distribution of power and resources in the society effect individuals and resources. Karl Marx posited that conflict arises as a result of an uneven distribution of resources in society's social order (Farey, 1992). Marx argues that conflict not only alters the current social structure, but it also transforms the whole social system itself. Strain and conflict are inherent in any social organization. If the social structure of a system is not examined, it is impossible to predict fundamental social change if just the changes of patterned interactions are examined (Coser, Sept 1957).

The term "consensus" is a euphemism for "ideology" in conflict theory. It is impossible to reach genuine agreement in a conflicted society because the more powerful people are able to force their views on others and make them accept them. Rather than preserving social order, consensus serves to solidify it. Endogenous and external conflict are two forms of conflict. The term "endogenous conflict" refers to the internal conflict that drives self-directed social development in a system. As a result, there is a wide range of conflicting values, viewpoints, and perspectives. Wars between states and other forms of inter-group conflict are examples of exogenous conflict. Critical theory, Feminist theory, Postmodern theory, Poststructural theory, Postcolonial theory, Queer theory, World systems theory, and the Race-Conflict Approach are some of the other approaches to conflict theory that may be found. Defining and clarifying group boundaries in the social system is one of the many advantages of addressing conflict. While this may not be the primary goal, it might assist to restore the group's cohesiveness in the face of adversity. As a result of internal disputes over aims, values or interests, norms and power relations within organizations might be re-evaluated in line with the perceived requirements of its members or subgroups Additionally, conflict has the effect of integrating social factors into a new system (Farey, 1992).

In the same way that Karl Marx did, Max Webber (1864–1920) regarded society's connections as best described by conflict. This emphasis on economic disputes, however, was put forward by Karl Marx, who focused on social class disparities between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Individuals and organizations, he said, exploit those who have less resources (such as power) by exploiting those who have more resources. Contrary to popular belief, Webber considered economic strife to be a secondary cause of war. A conflict-free society was not possible for Karl Max, but Max Webber argued that conflict is inevitable, independent of the economic or political structure in which it occurs. Individuals and organizations with a lot of money and influence are able to force their beliefs on others with a less amount of resources because they have more resources, yet Weber considered the many class divides in society as natural, inevitable, and acceptable (2001).

Weber's emphasis on three sorts of social groups—class, party, and status—as opposed to Marx's focus on two great classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) based only on economic concerns, was a departure from Marx's focus on two great classes. Class relates to economic concerns, while party is a term for political organizations. Members of a status group have a sense of identity, a set of values, and a way of life that distinguishes them from the rest of society. According to Weber, the law serves as a tool for the powerful to impose their will on others by criminalizing behaviors that conflict with their class interests. He said that "criminality is the product of the political fight of various groups striving to promote or increase their life chances in all civilizations." As for you, Bartollas (2005).

Karl Marx, like Weber, saw conflict as natural and beneficial in society. To ensure social transformation and, in the long term, societal stability, conflict must be present. As long as a society tries to maintain order by suppressing disagreement, it is doomed to remain stagnant. In the event of societal change, it is better to have it develop quietly and slowly (evolutionary) rather than violently (revolutionary). When it comes to conflict, even the 19th-century British philosopher Edmund Burke saw that "A state without means of some change is without means of its conservation" Walsh & Hemmens (2000; pg. 78).

Conflict theory excels because it tries to liberate mankind from the shackles of erroneous notions of "universality." One group acquires power and tries to justify it on the basis that it represents "freedom for everyone," which is universality. The truth is that "freedom for them" is what it really is. Controlling speech and political discussion is sometimes achieved by using universalist language to hide particular dominance. Critical/conflict theory's "unmasking" mode is one of its most appealing aspects.

The strongest link between conflict theory and socialism and authoritarianism is this: The conflict school's ultimate goal is a society in which everyone is free to work together to create socially beneficial things. Class rule and its cognates are assumed to be the root of all antisocial behavior, although this isn't always the case. Human nature is assumed to be good, but "civilization" in its many manifestations corrupts it. As a result, once the threat of "domination" is removed, individuals will begin working together. The "weak link" in the conflict school's reasoning is here.

When it comes to conflict, it's difficult not to have a set of views and ideals about its importance, and this theory is relevant here. All confrontation, according to some, must be avoided at all costs. Conflicts that benefit both society and individuals do exist. Those who are fed up with the current quo might benefit from conflict (those who wish to keep things as they are). Too frequently, attempting to manage or avert conflict has just served to delay or postpone the transformation in power relations that was ultimately required. Researchers utilized this hypothesis as a guide for how to use social media proactively not just to identify impending conflict, but also to function as an early warning system for conflict management where possible. Since then, policymakers have been using the Ushahidi platform to help them come up with measures to encourage positive social change. It is better to exacerbate conflict

and compete for dominance in certain situations. In Kenya, like in other African countries, the ruling class controls the mainstream media, including newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television channels, and other forms of outdoor media, in order to preserve their socioeconomic standing and political interests. Especially in developing nations like Kenya, where the majority of people live in poverty, this propensity has the unfortunate side effect of alienating them from the have-nots. A wider democratic space could be created by the Internet and social media, which decentralize and defragment communication. This could lead to evolutionary conflict (beneficial change) instead of contest and revolutions, which could lead to violent conflict as the masses are fed up with the constant doses of manipulated information and commercialization that have taken place in Arab countries over the years. To understand why social media platforms can be used not only to detect conflict, but also proactively to bring in evolutionally change that does not cause a lot of harm to the majority rather than revolutions and abrupt changes that lead to conflicts that may cause displacement of citizens, like it happened in Kenya during the post-election violence (PEV) of 2007-2008, this theory is critical.

## Challenges facing Ushahidi platform as a proactive actor in conflict prevention in Kenya since 2007

Some critics argue that social media tools are ineffective; Christensen for instance claims that social media platforms are built around weak ties and are only effective at increasing participation and on the other hand they lessen the motivation the participation requires. He says that people need close personal connection in order to get them take action, especially if it is announced through social media and the nature of action is risky and difficult. Then there are also logistical issues that arise, there were only 20% of the entire population that used internet in the Egyptian revolution (most concentration being in Cairo). Despite the limited access to the social media like Facebook and Twitter, there was a tremendous amount of pressure generated from the onset Cairo. There was the unofficial role played by the trade unions in the protests that was downplayed, away from the trade unionists there were drivers, factory workers and the Suez Canal laborers, nurses, doctors who finally brought down President Hosni Mubarak. Political theorists also claim that techno-utopian overstate the affordability of the new technologies while understating other underlying factors of their acquisition and use. Economic or gender issues for instance could affect their accessibility as well as other prevalent conditions in the country.

In Libya and Yemen for instance the severe totalitarian regimes stymied reform efforts, and at the core of the revolution there was a force that was more willing to criticize the authority and tolerates diversity than perhaps the mainstream public opinion. The case in Lebanon was different; the activists began to unite with the goal of outdoing the sectarian system. They managed to reach about 15000 people through a Facebook group entitled "In favor of ousting the Lebanese sectarian system toward a secular system", the group comprised of youths from different sects, regions and cultural backgrounds. It is thus the sectarian and divided nature of the Lebanese youth partisanship that rendered it difficult to use social media to mobilize the

young people through a common goal. This is clear illustration that the prevailing conditions can affect the outcome of the use of the social media when rallying behind a common goal. Questions also arise, once the dust of the revolution has settled where does social media fit into the new paradigm? Social media help push for a revolution but without creating the expected kind of long- term structures which for instance can become political parties after the regimes have toppled.

Clay Shirkely believes that the most promising way to look at social media as a peace building tool is to view it as a long- term tool that can strengthen the civil society and the public sphere. There is powerful evidence that social media can improve understanding and help establish ties between traditionally opposing groups. Facebooks own project in partnership with the Peace Pot Initiative at Stanford University called "Peace on Facebook". The initiative counted new friendship formation on the site between people who come from groups with a history of difficult relations. The count is done in revealing connections established across geographic division, e.g., friends between antagonizing political blocs, different ethnic groups or religious groups. On March 11th 2012, there were 123 844 online connections which were made between conflicting Muslims and Jews. It would be a gross oversimplification to suggest that these counts necessarily represent concrete progress towards greater real-world harmony. However, they do reflect the way that social media can help to maintain relationships online that may prove difficult in person due to social censure, political or logistical constraints.

The use of social media tools as a means to raise awareness and mobilize the masses against the status quo of a given country or regime is certainly not new. Social and political activism has had very significant episodes throughout the twentieth century, from non-violent civil disobedience in India to civil right movements in the US among many others, yet social media have given social movements useful tools to coordinate and to undertake collective action. Clay Shirky's analysis on the power of social media in enhancing democracies is probably one of the best attempts at glorifying social media movements (Shirky, 2010).

Shirky believes that social media have a key role in echoing public opinion. To him, access to conversation is far more important than access to information. In the long run, he argues, social media may help increase freedoms as the printing press, postal service or the telegraph did before. Internet has benefited grassroots movements by providing new possibilities for citizens to organize even under authoritarian regimes.

As Yochai Benkler argues, with the inclusion of Internet in the framework of social mobilization, there has been a qualitative change represented in the experience of being a potential speaker, as opposed to simply a listener (Benkler, 2006). According to him, Internet has not only reduced the cost of producing and publishing media content but it has also decentralized media production, making it much harder for authoritarian regimes to control and censor media outlets. Nevertheless, there are many detractors of this uncontested role of social media. Malcom Gladwell (2010) whose criticism of online activism became clear in

his article 'Why the revolution will not be twitted', disregards of the role of social networking in effecting social and political change (Shirky, 2010).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

### Site of study

The research was done in Nairobi County. The County is one of the 47 counties of Kenya. The smallest but most populous of the counties, its capital is Nairobi, which is also the capital and biggest city of Kenya. Nairobi County was formed in 2013 on the same borders as Nairobi Province, when Kenya's 8 provinces were separated into 47 counties. The county is comprised of 17 Parliamentary seats. Nairobi has undergone one of the most rapid growths in metropolitan centers. This is unlikely to slow down any time soon since the population in Kenya rises by an average of roughly 3 percent i.e. 1 million per year.

The county was recognized as having the Ushahidi platform headquarters. The Ushahidi platform for crisis communication is the case study used for this research. There are numerous reasons for consciously picking a case study, depending on whether it is information-rich, important, relevant, distinctive, or extreme (Patton, 1990).

### Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of perceptions, ideas, and assumptions about the manner in which one acquires information. Positivism and phenomenology are the two primary schools of thought that have been advanced in the realm of research philosophy.

Husserl (1907) is credited with developing the field of phenomenology, which may be defined as the study and description of things as they are consciously experienced. It does not take into account the theories in terms of the causal explanations they provide or the objective truth of those explanations. According to Manen (2007), phenomenological inquiry is concerned with people's experiences of things as well as the ways in which these experiences are understood. As a result, its primary objective is to investigate the ways in which individuals create meaning. The basic objective of a phenomenological research study is to get an understanding of the perceptions, viewpoints, and comprehensions that individuals have on a certain event (or phenomena). According to Manen (2007), the primary goal of phenomenologists is not the identification or measurement of phenomena; rather, their focus is on what things signify. In particular, phenomenologists hold the belief that human experience may serve as a source of data in and of itself. Research is not necessarily limited to solely consisting of activities that include measuring the presence of physical phenomena.

The philosophical theory known as positivism was pioneered by Comte (1850), who argued that knowledge is more about describing things than it is about asking questions. Positivists are only able to acknowledge positive facts and occurrences that can be seen by the naked eye. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2009) interpretation, the positivist philosophy takes into account only visible facts that can be tallied and measured at the same time. The positivist system adheres to the conventional, scientific point of view towards the world. It is distinguished by the creation and testing of hypotheses that are founded on pre-existing theories about observable aspects of social reality. Empirical measurement that is founded on quantitative procedures, experiments, and surveys, in addition to statistical analysis, are all used in the positivist methodology (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Positivists contend that while investigating and writing about human experience, one should use scientific technique and language since this is believed to keep the study free of the values, feelings, politics, and ideology of the researcher. In order to accomplish the goals of the research, hypotheses were derived, operationalized, put to the test, and inferences were generated from the outcomes of the data analysis. These inferences served as the foundation for generalization.

Because positivism adheres to a logical method to check assertions about knowledge or epistemology, it was decided to apply a largely positivist research paradigm for this particular investigation. The area of philosophy known as epistemology is concerned with determining the nature of knowledge and the amount to which humans possess knowledge, as well as making efforts to answer the question of how to differentiate between sufficient and inadequate knowledge. Alternative philosophical approaches to knowing and the justification of that knowledge are represented by paradigms. When it comes to research paradigms, there are two primary schools of thinking that reflect two unique paradigms. These schools of thought are called positivism and interpretivism, and they are founded on assumptions about knowledge (epistemology) and the truth or reality (ontology).

## Research Method

The research method was a correlational design utilizing cross-sectional survey methodology and included a number of survey instruments. Cross-sectional surveys are studies aimed at determining the frequency (or level) of a particular attribute, such as a specific exposure, disease or any other health-related event, in a defined population at a particular point in time. This design also corresponds to what Bryman describes as Cross-sectional research design that aims at getting data from multiple cases at a given point in time so as to analyse relationships across a number of variables of interest (Bryman, 2004). This study was based on such a design because; its quantification characteristic helps in consistent benchmarking (Bryman, 2004). However, cross-sectional studies usually lack internal validity (Bryman, 2004) and this study tried to respond to this concern through the qualitative component of this study. In this study therefore, the qualitative data was used to enrich the descriptions generated by, and or from the quantitative data.

## Target Population

Population can be defined as all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, event or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the results of the study. In total 333 respondents, team was targeted. The study population included Ushahidi Platform had 270 employees at the time the study was being undertaken which were distributed as 10 Sole proprietors, 27 Technical advisors, 47 Lead developers, 33 Team leaders, 13 corporate account managers, 53 Project managers and 87 Technologist.

## Sampling and Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the process of selecting the people who participated in a study. This process should be representative of the whole population. Sampling is hence the procedure, process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in the study (Ogula, 2005). A sample is a smaller group or sub-group obtained from the accessible population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). This study adopted the stratified sampling technique. From the possible 333 target population, stratified random sampling was employed to select a total of 100 sample population. This is 30% of the total population. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) states that in stratified sampling where population within each stratum is known, a sample of 10-30% is adequate representation for data collection.

## Data Collection Methods and Tools

Triangulation is used in social sciences for supporting the validity of results by adopting different methods of researching an issue or a research question. In this paper, interviews, focus group discussions and content analysis of the Ushahidi platform are chosen as the tools of data collection.

## Use of Questionnaires

Because of the size of the sample of people who are going to be participating in this study, the use of questionnaires as the method of data collection will be an excellent choice. The researcher is thinking about using this tool since it not only helps save time but also guarantees that the secrecy of the information will be maintained. The majority of the questions on the questionnaires are structured, while there are just a few open-ended ones. Both approaches are necessary in order to obtain a diverse set of responses from the respondents and to ascertain their perspectives on the phenomenon that is the subject of the investigation. Structured questions force respondents to provide answers that are specific, while open-ended questions allow for a wider range of responses. In most cases, the use of questionnaires will make it possible to gather data from a broad pool of people in a variety of settings.

## Key Informant Interview

Interactions between a researcher or researchers and one or more participants, in which the sharing of information contributes to the construction of scientific or contextual interpretations, are the defining characteristics of a qualitative interview (Edwards & Holland 2013). The authors go on to clarify that interviews may be conducted face-to-face, in the form of questionnaires, or in the style of a narrative, thematic, or topic-centered approach. Alternatively, they can take the shape of a topic-centered approach. To get an all-encompassing comprehension of the subject matter that is being investigated, the purpose of qualitative research is to piece together a meaning based on the responses of the people who were interviewed for the study. This was for the purpose of the quality control procedure.

Knowledge is gained via the verbal exchange of ideas between an interviewer and an interviewee or a group of interviewers. This technique may also include more than one interviewee. In contrast to regular discussions, research interviews are almost always conducted with the purpose of serving the purposes of the researcher, which are unrelated to the discourse that is taking place (Creswell, 2003). The majority of interviews used in qualitative research are semi-structured. This is because the agenda is often determined by the researcher's interests; nevertheless, there is still opportunity for the respondent's involvement and engagement. The researcher conducted in-person interviews with a variety of participants to obtain a broad variety of information on the function of social media platforms as proactive tools for the prevention of conflict. The key informants came not just from the fields of peace studies and conflict prevention but also from the area of social media research. An expert in social media was questioned for this article; this person was involved in the creation and implementation of the Ushahidi Crisis Mapping and Reporting platform, and they were a participant in the interview. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), qualitative data is frequently dependent on interviews with key informants. Interviews enable the researcher to understand the statistical data collected from quantitative research by providing explanations of the figures and additional information that goes beyond the figures. Interviews were conducted with five top workers of the Ushahidi platform, who are considered to be key persons at Ushahidi.

## Focus Group Discussions

The researcher conducted discussions with focus groups in all four of the different sites. Five to seven young people will participate in each focus group. By interacting and conversing with the members in the focus group, the researcher is able to get insight into the perspectives, attitudes, experiences, and responses of the participants about the phenomenon that is of interest. Focus groups have a high apparent validity due to the fact that the concept is simple, the findings are plausible, the cost is inexpensive, and they assist in achieving outcomes in a short amount of time.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Weaknesses of social media with interest to peace building and conflict prevention

Respondents were kindly requested to say what they consider to be weaknesses of social media with interest to peace building and conflict prevention. The peace building expert in the FGD explained: *"In order for one to report violence, they need to be assured of their security and they must also trust that action will be taken once they filed any report on violence. What this means, is that citizens will be both the generators and the consumers of the information on violence if they use social media".* Conflict information management ethics is thus a key competence, since information needs to be verified and authenticated before it can be released to the masses. At present very few people trust that action can be taken by government official if they reported violence through social media. For social media to be effective for early warning there has to be an assurance of accessing accurate information so that they could take precaution. The social media platforms must be seen to be giving accurate information about violence for users to trust it. He concludes that platforms must also have user friendly interfaces and easy to remember procedure.

One major weak point social media as a tool for conflict prevention is the lack of ethical standards and professionalism for the users. It is too liberal and thus can be used to spread unverified information and distorted facts that might be detrimental to peace building and conflict prevention. This has led to some of the users already questioning the credibility of the information that is circulated through social media

The other weak point about social media as tool for peace building is that it is dependent to a major extent on the access to internet. The availability of internet in low units doesn't necessarily mean cheap access. So over time the high cost of internet might affect the efficiency of the social media as a tool for conflict prevention and management. This scenario is even more pronounced in remote location with poor internet connectivity or electricity supply challenges

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that Conflict information management ethics is a key competence, since information needs to be verified and authenticated before it can be released to the masses. At present very few people trust that action can be taken if they reported violence through social media to the authorities. The study concludes that social media platforms must also have user friendly interfaces and easy to remember procedure. Additionally, respondents indicated that lack of a clear goal was the main challenge affecting Ushahidi platform as a proactive actor in conflict prevention in Kenya since 2007. In tandem with the study findings, Miall (2014) observed that Conflict prevention and peace building practitioners can best utilize the media if they are clear about their goal (their product) and also know who, specifically, they want to

communicate to through the media. Social marketing is never aimed at the 'general public.' A sophisticated and strategic use of the media is more focused on particular target and segment audiences. For example, if the goal of a social marketing campaign is to stop littering, first research needs to be done to determine who is littering the most and where. In many cultures, young men are the chief culprits. In this case, young peopls are the 'target audience.' Successful media campaigns aimed at stopping littering use specific messages like 'littering isn't cool' and target magazines, radio programs and billboards seen by young men.

Additionally, Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse (2011) opined that if a peacebuilding organization wants to promote cross-cultural dialogue between ethnic groups, they should think about who, in particular, they would like to join the dialogue. The media can be used successfully only when peacebuilding organizations have done the hard work to narrow down their goals and target audiences. Knowing the specific goals and the audiences required to meet their goal enables peacebuilding professionals to be more sophisticated in their choice of when and where to use the media. The media can help achieve goals in conflict prevention and peacebuilding when paired with approaches or strategies. The media is not appropriate for all peacebuilding efforts however. Highly-sensitive negotiations, for example, are often best kept quiet without the pressure brought by media seeking to highlight areas of conflict (which helps them sell their media products) rather than serve to foster a focus on common ground, a problem-solving orientation, and hopefulness required for diplomacy.

## Conclusion

The study concluded that the increase in penetration of mobile telephones among the youths especially those represented in this study provides the opportunity to integrate mobile telephony and internet based social media platforms to increase the participation level of the youth in reporting violence and taking part as well as reporting peace building activity. This move will enable those who posses' ordinary mobile phones (which cannot connect to internet) to participate, since they can simply use SMS to report violence or peace building activities. Likewise, they can receive warning and alerts for conflict and take precaution.

## Recommendations

The study recommends that when peace agreements are reached, efforts to sustain peacebuilding and enhance reconciliation and reconstruction are crucial. Ushahidi platform interventions can take the form of Ushahidi platform training, especially in the fields of impartial or inter-ethnic news reporting. This is news reporting that adequately reflects the ethnic make-up of a country and the true diversity of opinions. Programming aimed at sustaining peace through building support for peace agreements and focusing on reconciliation and supporting development of free media through policy and legislative reform and other measures

## REFERENCES

Benkler, L. (2012). How social media could Revolutionize Third- World Cities. The Atlantic. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/ 2012/11/how -social -media-could-revolutionize-third-world-cities/265135.

Creswell J.W (2003). Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods

Goldstein, J. and Rotich, J. (2008). Digitally Networked Technology in Kenya's 2007–2008 Post-Election Crisis; Internet & Democracy Case Study Series. Berkman Center Research Publication No. 2008-09.

Iraki, T. S. (2010). Reciprocity in negotiations: An analysis of bargaining interaction. *Communication Monographs*, 49, 171-191.

Roach C., (1993). Information and Culture in War and Peace: Overview, Communication and culture in warand peace, edited by Colleen Roach, SAGE Publications, California.

Saila, F. M. (2015). New Media Technologies and Hate Messages: Investigating the Role of Social Media in Propagation of Hate Messages in Kenya.

Shirky, C. (2010). *Conflict in Africa: Theory, Processes and Institutions of Management.* Nairobi: CCR Publications.

Sid, C. (2010). The Political Power of Social Media. *Foreign Affairs*, 90(1), 28-41. Available from http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67038/clay-shirky/the-political-power-of-social-media

Stogyte, G., (2013). The influence of technology developers' cultural values on ICT design for crisis communication: A case study of the Ushahidi platform.

Wa-Mungai, M., (2010). Soft Power, Popular Culture and the 2007 Elections, 'in KarutiKanyinga and Duncan Okello (eds.), Tensions and Revisals in Democratic Transitions: The Kenya 2007 General Elections, Nairobi: Society for International Development