

**TEARFUND PRESS RELEASE: 3 January 2008**

## **1. Kenya violence hampers humanitarian work**

Kenya's spiralling descent into violence and chaos is hampering the work of Tearfund staff and partners in the country. In the worst affected areas workers have been confined to their houses due to violent clashes and looting.

Tear gas and water cannons have been fired on protesters trying to attend a banned opposition rally in Nairobi this morning. Nationally hundreds of people are dead and tens of thousands are fleeing for safety.

Speaking from Nairobi this morning, Peter Njuguna, Project Manager of St John's Community Centre, a Tearfund partner working in Nairobi's slum areas says, "The situation is very volatile here. I can hear gunshots from our office and the roads are blocked."

The insecurity is hampering access to vulnerable people with whom St Johns work. "We have 160 people living with Aids under our care but we cannot reach them. Our health clinic and work with vulnerable children was due to restart today but this is not possible because of clashes in the area."

The violence follows the victory of incumbent president Mwai Kibaki and claims by opposition rival Raila Odinga that he was denied the presidency due to vote rigging. The consequences have been widespread ethnic tension as the Kikuyu (Kibaki's tribe) and the Luo (Odinga's tribe) have clashed.

One of the most brutal acts reported so far has been the killing of at least 30 people taking shelter in a church that was set alight by a mob.

Kenya's insecurity has made the assessment of humanitarian needs difficult. The need for stability is pressing, underlined by the worrying proliferation of road blocks run by vigilantes. It is feared that these roadblocks will have an effect on the distribution of food and humanitarian supplies if they continue.

Peter Njuguna continues, "I feel very frustrated and disappointed that we cannot carry out our work. We know there are families with very young children who need food, medication and shelter in one of our main project areas but we cannot reach them.

"We are taking the situation day by day at the moment. We cannot predict how things will go. But we hope for peace."

Outside of Nairobi, reports suggest many people in the Rift Valley town of Eldoret have been displaced and are in need of food, water and shelter. Ugandan officials also tell of families fleeing across the border.

Tearfund is encouraging people to pray:-

that the ethnic violence and killing between the Luo and the Kikuyu will stop.

that diplomatic pressure helps secure a peaceful end to the political impasse.

that Tearfund staff and partners are safe.

that the right leader for Kenya would have his position confirmed and that the country would be able to accept the result.