

Davidson College | Frankline Edong'a | Amani Youth Project| Kenya
Summer 2022: June 4 – July 22

Background

Back home, there has been an unending tribal conflict between the Turkana community and the Pokot community. Attacks by both communities are strategically planned to confiscate livestock, often leading to violence and death. These conflicts have had devastating consequences on the social, economic, and political life of both communities. During these encounters many innocent lives have been lost, property destroyed, and schools burned down. Over the last two years, over 50 people have lost their lives to these attacks while some have sustained serious injuries.

In the past, peace talks between the two communities have failed. Although the government tries to assist, peace stays for a few weeks, and then conflict rises again. It is important to understand that the young warriors are often the ones involved in the raids. These youth are encouraged to raid each other to prove their warrior status but their loss of life translates to a loss for each of our communities. I want to use Amani to redeem the youth from self-destruction and political influence, and to find potential solutions to the insecurity problems in my home community.

My Intervention

Amani ("peace" in Swahili) is an educational program and peace campaign aimed at helping youth realize that they could be ambassadors of peace. We will teach youth from both Pokot and Turkana communities to learn about each other and to work together on community projects. By taking an educational approach often overlooked by community elders, the project aims at developing a youth-led approach to the issue of insecurity and conflict resolution in the Turkana and Pokot communities. This will create awareness and foster a friendly relationship among the youth from both communities. Moreover, it will nurture leadership and youth activism for peace.

We will work with schools in the region to ensure that students are provided with learning materials, a safe learning environment, and access to speakers who are community leaders. In addition, the project will also provide the communities with needs that currently lead to conflict. For example, we will provide the communities with water tanks and water troughs for livestock to stop tribal conflict over water sources.

Often during long breaks from school students engage in raiding practices. To redirect this behavior, we will host multi-tribal sports competitions during those breaks. We will hold friendly matches with mixed teams made of both Pokot and Turkana people, bringing the communities together in a fun environment. In addition, we will try to build the Amani playground for the youth of both communities and built by youth from both communities. The tribes will have to work together in both extracurricular endeavors. They will help maintain the soccer field, clean the compound, work together to build the playground, and more. This will impart a sense of solidarity and teamwork, teaching the two communities how they can work together towards common goals.

To ensure success, we will solicit all the support we can get from the county government and local tribal community leaders. The project will also work with conflict resolution experts who can train the youth ambassador committees. Since there are representatives of NGOs such as the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Kenya Red Cross in both counties, we will also join hands with them to support this project for peace in Turkana and Pokot. I am in talks with Mr. Immanuel Amojong, an associate at the office of the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), a governmental institution that grants youth educational loans, and he will help me connect with relevant authorities in the county as well as the youth in the area. I have also discussed the project with the director of the Kenya Scholar Access Program (KenSAP), and he has agreed that the program will support the project with an Alumni Summer Project Mentor.

Implementation Plan

Stage 1 (1-2 weeks): Work with secondary schools and other partners to identify and form a committee of 12 dedicated youth ambassadors (6 Turkana and 6 Pokot). Identify community leaders who are interested in making change and achieving peaceful coexistence in our community. Julius Naukot, the deputy principal of Silale primary school, and Jackson Ekwang, the chief of Lomelo, have offered to help.

Stage 2 (1 week): Work with partner NGOs to provide a one-week intensive training camp regarding the objectives of the project, their roles in the project, and conflict resolution methods.

Stage 3 (1 week): Organize and prepare for the community peace campaign, Amani sports competitions, and youth education events. The committee will work together to find host institutions for events, organize community youth, and purchase required materials for the project.

Stage 4 (ongoing): The peace awareness campaign will have the committee travel around Turkana and Pokot communities to talk to youth about the importance of communities coming together. The committee will distribute peace-making materials in the area and discuss the upcoming sports competitions and other activities. During these activities, the committee will address the effects of conflict and the importance of promoting peaceful coexistence, with more emphasis on the relationship among the youth.

Stage 5 (final two weekends): We will hold the sports competitions and the Amani cultural event that brings together youth from both communities in harmony. These special weekends will bring the warring communities together in a peaceful environment and teach them the benefits of working together. Special guests will attend the event to speak about peace in Kenya.

Stage 6: To ensure sustainability, the committee will continue its work beyond the end of the project. We will create social media platforms to continue fostering peaceful coexistence through discussions. Each year, new ambassadors will be selected and trained to run the following year's program. They will continue to identify the challenges of the communities and work with the government at the sub-county level and NGO partners to sustain peace. In addition, the leaders of the two communities who have already offered to help with the early stages of the project will also facilitate its continuation by liaising with the sub-county to ensure the general success of future events.

Conclusion

The tribal conflicts between the Pokot and Turkana have kept the area underdeveloped and have kept the people in poverty. The rest of Kenya is ready to give up on our region, but the youth can change this reality. This project is aimed at showing the youth that they can take on responsibility for their futures and they can work together to stop the wars and find appropriate solutions for their communities. It will help the youth to rediscover themselves, rethink their understanding of the world, and develop better ways of living in the region. By stressing the significance of education in peace-making, the project will show youth the importance of learning and the importance of coming together for common causes.

By bringing the youth together, the Amani Youth Project will nurture consciousness among the youth and will lower the levels of insecurity across the tribal borders. As the region sees more peaceful coexistence, the national government will invest more in the region and help develop the region. This will make it easier for people to increase trade and share ideas in the region. With less insecurity and more development, parents will be able to feed their families and send their youth to school. Lowering the poverty level will in turn reduce the tribal conflict and over time, we will create a more prosperous region in Northern Kenya.

