

## PROJECTS FOR PEACE GRANT PROPOSAL

**Project Title:** Strengthening Intercommunity Relationships Among Pastoral Communities of Northern Kenya Through an Integrated Peace and Education Initiative

**Country of Project Execution:** Kenya

**Sponsoring College:** Lehigh University

**Project Leader:** Boniface Kyalo, Lehigh University (2022), Kenya

**Supporting Organization/ Individual:** Edwin Magera, Harvard University (2015), Kenya

**Project Duration:** Two months (June – August 2019)

### **Project Background and Motivation**

In 2013 I was a freshman at Alliance High School, a leading boys' national school with students from all 47 counties of Kenya. At the end of our first term I assumed all were eager to go back home and reunite with our families. As soon as the principal dismissed us, scores of students rushed to meet their families and in two hours, the school was deserted. It happened that my mother was caught in traffic and would be late. As I waited, I was surprised to see a group of students in sports gear getting ready to play in the football field. I quickly joined them for a quick game and tossed my question to them as to why they were still in school. They were students from the West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet and Turkana regions; forced to remain in school or look for alternative housing options with relatives or friends in Nairobi due to rising tensions in their community.

Cattle raiding is a traditional practice in West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet and Turkana regions that has been in play since time immemorial. It was aimed at acquiring cattle to replenish stock lost due natural calamities such as drought or to grow their stock for bride price and prestige. Fatalities in raids were unheard of until late 90's when rifles and ammunition became readily accessible to the two communities. According to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), between 2005 and 2015, 573 people lost their lives while 1,752 were injured and 589 houses burnt due to cattle rustling and intertribal clashes between the Pokot community in West Pokot County and the Turkana community in Turkana County.

These two communities raise cattle as their primary economic activity, despite low profit margins and increasing pressure from urbanization that is reducing pasture lands and already scarce water resources. Additionally, climate change has greatly affected the hydrological cycle in this region, extending drought periods for many months and necessitating emergency food and water relief efforts by the national government and NGOs. The prolonged drought periods have led to increase in cattle rustling and clashing over grazing fields.

In 2010, Edwin Magera, a close friend and mentor, catapulted West Pokot into the limelight by emerging among the best in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations. The media highlight that ensued showed that even in the depths of hopelessness and despair, a ray of hope can shine. Magera headed to Harvard for his undergraduate education. Since 2010, both communities have embarked on radical pursuit of education for all their children. Community leaders, school heads and locals petitioned the government for improvement of their education facilities. For the first time since the 1980s, the government provided subsidies to build better classrooms, purchase equipment, and hire teachers in recognition of the 2010 performance and future education potential in these two regions. Moreover, both communities have seen massive increases in enrollment.

### **Project Operationalization**

I plan to build a peace and education initiative riding on the wave of development ushered in since 2010. This initiative will be a long-term peace and developmental blueprint via an intercommunal peace process, and an education and mentorship initiative.

#### **a) Intercommunal peace process**

In the past there have been efforts towards getting the communities together to find a long-lasting peace solution, but they fail to address the root of the problem which is loss of cattle due natural calamities or disease, the main motivation of cattle rustling. The peace process will involve holding consultative meetings between community leaders from the Pokot and Turkana communities, with local government authorities, religious leaders, community-based organizations (CBOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) serving as mediators. I plan to engage and partner with the following organizations and bodies in this process:

- **Kenya Commercial Bank foundation** – The KCB foundation group has a program dubbed Mali Ni Mifugo that seeks to reduce extreme poverty by increasing income for communities through training, mentorship and provision of business development grants. The livestock value chain program targets livestock keepers in the arid and semi-arid regions of Kenya. I seek to leverage my affiliation with the foundation as a previous scholar to advocate for the inclusion of the West Pokot and Turkana regions into the program. With the program, the Turkana and West Pokot farmers will benefit in training in the following:

- I. Business development and financial literacy
- II. Risk management and insurance
- III. Governance, leadership and management
- IV. Value addition, Market development activities and collective bargaining

- **Sikom Peace Network for Development.** - Sikom is a Non-governmental Organization that is dedicated to building peace through innovative education, training, research and practice working with educators, youth, community and religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, and governmental agencies to transform social conflicts into opportunities for peaceful change. We seek to work with them in their current efforts to reduce resource-based conflicts and political violence:
  - I. Strengthening capacities of pastoralist community groups, local peace structures to effectively participate in identifying and developing local solutions with a view of promoting equitable sharing and management of inter-County resources along Loya – Turkwel border corridor.
  - II. Developing the capacity of young people, Women and People with Disability with an aim of taking a leading role in promoting peace and conflict transformation through sports, music, cultural enterprises and mentorship programs in West Pokot County.
- **West Pokot Ministry of Education and Turkana Ministry of Education** – The respective ministries are mandated to provide quality education from early childhood to vocational training as well as promote sports. I seek to build on their current efforts by proposing an Intercounty sports and cultural festival to help promote a cultural understanding between the two communities. I believe the community will benefit by:
  - I. Integration through sports and talent development through the intercounty sports tournaments.
  - II. Access to scholarships and bursaries offered by the KCB foundation and respective ministries

Together with a small team from the mentioned organizations, we will hold meetings with the respective groups. We will hold individual peace-g geared meetings with each stakeholder (the respective community elders) with a view of bringing them together for a peace-signing meeting. We will use the Mali Ni Mifugo program as leverage, with the insurance package as the conditional part of the agreement. The individual meetings will seek to achieve individual-level commitments to maintaining peace in the region. The individual-level meetings are meant to ease the tensions that exist between the two communities before the final meeting which will be the peace-signing meeting. All meetings will take place in county “peace schools” that the government of Kenya is already rolling out. Peace schools are schools that aim to integrate conflicted communities through education. Their curriculum is geared towards promoting unity, peace and development. We believe it will give a chance to show the respective elders the unifying aspect of education as well as its potential to change lives.

#### b) Education and mentorship

- I will bring together a group of approximately 20 highly-achieved young people (those who have excelled in their academic and early professional life but have come from extremely tough backgrounds like Pokot and Turkana) to conduct two weeks of mobile teaching and mentorship exercises across Turkana and Pokot. This group will also demonstrate the importance of education and illustrate exactly how a community benefits by seriously educating its boys and girls. Magera will be included in this group as an instructor. We intend to go to elementary schools and high schools because we aim to increase the percentage of primary school to secondary school and secondary school to tertiary institutions transition rates in the regions. The impact of our education may not be felt instantly but we aim in the coming years to see a positive feedback. Upstart Consult, founded by Magera and other Kenya Ivy League alumni, will lead the mentorship forums and the training of the approximately 20 individuals who will act as ambassadors of the program. To ensure the continuity of the program. I intend to organize a mentorship forum each year across schools in the two regions.

#### Expected Outcomes

I aim to establish long-term, sustainable peace as well as socio-economic development of the peoples of Turkana and West Pokot. Specifically, I foresee the following critical outcomes for this project:

- Peace process
  - o A shared understanding of the value of peace between the respective communities and the recognition of the need for unity and sharing.
  - o A long-term peace agreement centered on strong local government, religious, CBO, and CSO support -
  - o Reduced or eliminated cattle rustling and intertribal clashes while improving their socioeconomic standing.
- Education and mentorship
  - o Increased enrolment of kids into elementary school from the current net of 60% to 80%+, and high school from the current net of <20% to more than 40% in both communities in five years.
  - o Enhanced sense of the socio-economic value of education and how that has the potential to alter the cause of the community for the better in future years.