

Strengthening inter-community Peace Among Pastoral Communities of Northern Kenya Through an
Integrated Peace and Education Initiative
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Section 1

b. A two-sentence summary of the goals of your project. We sought to promote peace and education within Turkana and West Pokot. We sought to engage the community and external partners (local government authorities, community-based organizations, and civil society organizations) in finding long-term solutions to cattle rustling.

c. Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project? What were they? No, we did not seek nor receive external funding.

d. How did you come up with the idea for your project? While at Alliance High School in Kenya, a leading boys' national high school, I interacted with students from Turkana and West Pokot counties who were often forced to remain in school due to cattle rustling attacks in their communities during school holidays. As time went by, I became invested in understanding the dynamics of the conflict such that when my partner, Edwin Magema, floated the idea of a summer project, I couldn't have been happier. Edwin Magema schooled in the region before proceeding to Harvard. His knowledge of the conflict played well in shaping the project. I would say that the project idea was greatly based on interest and a desire to positively affect the lives of the respective community members.

e. Why do you think the issue your project is responding to exists? There are a lot of factors that come into play with this exact conflict.

- Marginalization – there has been slow growth in the two regions since the pre-colonial era, partly explained by their resistance to the colonial government and the geographical nature of the Northern region of Kenya. It was often viewed as a region of little economic significance hence the slow growth. However, since the discovery of oil and wind power potential in Turkana, there is more attention going to the region in general.
- Underdevelopment – This is a direct consequence of continued marginalization of the region since the colonial era. West Pokot and Turkana counties have a lot of catching up to do regarding basic social amenities such as schools and roads. For the last couple of decades, underdevelopment has been a hindrance to potential businesspeople from other regions of Kenya as well as internationally. This is changing due to an increase in conservancies in the regions and the discovery of oil in Turkana.
- Illiteracy - A comparison between the education level attained and conflicted areas shows a significant correlation. This can be explained by the fact the conflicted areas don't provide a conducive environment for education and illiteracy has made the warriors susceptible to cattle rustling.
- Poverty – This is a direct effect of marginalization, underdevelopment and illiteracy. As the adage goes, 'a drowning man will clutch at a straw'. The communities desperately try to stay afloat and are susceptible to engage in any activity for quick income including cattle rustling.
- Climate change – regions in the Arid and Semi-Arid lands (ASAL) of Kenya have been experiencing prolonged periods of drought punctuated by heavy rainfall that leads to flooding. This has had devastating effects on the communities in those regions in the form of loss of human and animal life. During the dry season, there is little or no conflict because the communities are concerned more with getting food and water for themselves and their cattle. Consequently, there is an observed increase of attacks during the onset of the rainy season as they strive to replenish stock lost during the dry season. Climate change has led to reduced grazing lands and dry water pans. This has led to a resource conflict.

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- Unscrupulous business people – They commercialized the cattle raiding by creating a ready market for stolen cattle and provide support for raids in the form of arms and intelligence. They work on both sides (Turkana and Pokot) and fuel the conflict for their own commercial gain. In any conflict, according to Marxism, there is always someone or a group of people with interest. In this case, unscrupulous businesspeople.
- Politicians – In our peace dialogue meeting, it emerged that some politicians have an active stake in the conflict. They use the conflict as a bargaining point during political rallies and some have been accused of funding/influencing some raids.

f. Why did you choose your host site to work in? I worked from Nairobi, West Pokot and Turkana counties. I worked in Nairobi so as to be in reach with major corporates and NGOs that I intended to partner with. I worked from West Pokot and Turkana so as to have a clear picture of the situation on the ground, and to collaborate with Community-Based Organizations in the two regions.

g. What was it like to work in your host site? Working from Nairobi offered a steep learning curve since I worked from a leading consulting firm's office as a guest. I learned a lot from them before heading to West Pokot and Turkana. I was pushed beyond my comfort zone since the two counties are so different from Nairobi City in terms of infrastructure, communication and food. Overall, it was an amazing experience that was totally different from my norm. We had meetings in forests in accordance with their cultures and I learned a lot from the two communities. There was a slight transportation issue due to the bad road conditions, especially when accessing zones outside their main towns.

h. Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work? In what ways? Yes, I was worried that the inter-community meeting wouldn't happen due to the current state between the two communities. My biggest fear was that they did not want to be in the same room.

i. What were the challenges you encountered in communicating with people? There existed a significant language barrier. The Turkana community understood Swahili (one of Kenya's national languages) while the West Pokot community did not. For the meetings, we had to go with interpreters from both communities to make communication a success.

j. How do you define peace? Peace is an ideal state where people are free to enjoy their economic and human rights.

k. How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? The inter-community peace caravan initiated key peace conversations and we hope that the respective council of elders will continue spreading peace in the region as agreed upon.

Long-term? Phase two of my project seeks to work with the respective County governments, Foundations, NGOs and local CBOs from the two communities in actualizing our recommendations and any other viable ideas with an aim to collectively end the conflict. Phase two began in August after the peace dialogue meeting. Our efforts to promote education compounded by our partners' efforts will increase the number of students from primary school to secondary school, where the two counties have been trailing behind the national figures.

l. Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?

Systems do exist in what we might consider chaos, and as much as some societies might engage in activities that may seem chaotic to the common man, it is worth acknowledging that there exists a reason

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or reasons behind that. Our contribution as problem-solvers is to understand how we can best offer solutions without over-imposing set systems while actualizing our goals.

The project changed my perspective of our world. We all have different realities and we should appreciate the little that we have. What we might consider little is much to other people.

Section 2

