

Title of Project: Kuresoi Peace Project.

Country: Kenya.
College: Future Generations Graduate School.

Students Home Country: Kenya.

Students Name; Stanley Mwaura Nderitu

Project summary goals:

The project's aim is to build cultural competency of the people living in Kuresoi district for sustainable peace, through developing skills for non-violent dispute resolution and problem solving. The project was funded solely by the Kathryn Davis Peace projects funds and implemented in partnership with YGEP (Youth, Governance and Environmental Programme) and MEAP- Maendeleo Endelevu Action Program

Project Background:

The people living in Kuresoi have been polarized into groups and political parties along ethnic identity and ethnic alliances. The relationship between the groups is characterized by suspicion, stereotypes, tension and fear. The politicians take advantage of the pre-existing fear to rally communities along ethnic lines. This results in unhealthy competition which is easily triggered into violent conflict during elections.

The impact of violent conflict has been death, destruction of property and natural resources, and increased levels of poverty. The youth are the most affected by this violence. They are the perpetrators, as foot soldiers and are manipulated by the politicians and elders due to lack of information, gainful employment, skills and limited opportunities for eking a descent livelihood.

Implementation:

The intervention is to sensitize the youth and the larger community on the need to nurture an environment that promotes peaceful co-existence of all ethnic groups during and beyond the electioneering time. The challenge was how to reach the youth and community without creating expectations that the project could not meet. Community elders have influence on the youth, so changing the behavior of the youth would not be successful without a change of the elders' perceptions; effort was made to involve influential elders in the discussions with the youth.

Temoyetta secondary was chosen as a neutral ground for holding the dialogue meetings and workshops and as a focal point which is referred to as a "Peace Centre" to empower the youth on how to co-exist by building on their cultural competency. The peace centre also acts as a resource center, a link for existing opportunities, and a facilitator for early warning and response.

A group of 30 youth leaders, 16 elders, 17 students and 7 representing the three major ethnic groups of the Kalejin, Kikuyu, and Kisii was identified. Five others representing the minority groups of Luo, Luhya and Kamba was also identified. Participation by the females

other than the girls from the school was very poor, an indicator of the low participation of the women in decision making.

The project involved meetings in which the community would reflect on their needs and relationships, analyze and prioritize them and then develop a strategy for action. This would culminate in a community action plan.

Seventy-five people are directly involved, from the eight villages with a population of about 4000 youth and elders . The 75 are also training in basic ICT (information and communication technology) skills at the peace center.

The youth and elders who have undergone this process have started giving dialogue a chance and hopefully have developed skills that will allow them to accommodate different viewpoints. The formation of inter-ethnic group activities will increase the interdependence of members of this community. This may lead to durable peace as the community moves together to improve their socio-economic status. The community action plan gives the community a road map on how to relate in the future. YGEP and the school as a resource center and linkage to other stakeholders will ensure sustainability of the project and a long term relationship for durable peace.

The impact of this project could be increased if such activities are replicated in other neighboring villages in Kuresoi and even beyond. Development of Peace centers in schools would ensure that the youth access skills and practices for democratic co-existence with others at an early age.

My definition of peace:

The word peace in my local language (Kikuyu) is “Thaayu” which like in many other languages is translated and used as a greeting or farewell. It’s also used to mean well-being, safety, security, and equity. Peace to me is therefore freedom from all forms of fears that prevent one from meeting his or her own basic needs as envisaged in the word ‘Thaayu’.

This project in the short term equips the community with skills and attitudes that allow different ethnic communities to dialogue. This in the long-term will result in a community that resolves their conflicting viewpoints without resulting into violent conflict. Participating in this project has enabled me to look at my own biases and how they have influenced the way I viewed other ethnic communities using my own lenses. Peace has to start at individual level in our minds. Our actions collectively can contribute to world peace; it has to start with me.

The Kathryn Davis Peace project has also taught me that small individual efforts can change a neighborhood, a village, and several villages and ultimately change the world. It’s possible.

Personal statement:

In a world that seems to be full of violent conflict, one may be tempted to feel small and hopeless, yet through efforts such as this by Kathryn Davis, Kuresoi and the entire world is reminded that a Peaceful world is possible IF only we play our SMALL ROLES. I will.

Stanley Nderitu – Davis Projects for Peace 2012

Kuresoi, Kenya Peace Project

