



Peacebuilding among the Gusii & Maasai ethnic communities: Kilgoris, Kenya—August 23, 2011



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I have been to peace meetings and committees, but coming together this way—men and women, Maasai and Gusii all in one place—is a new experience for me

-Participant

Introduction

On the 23rd of August 2011, 55 leaders from the Maasai and Gusii communities convened in St. Theresa's Church in Kilgoris for a peacebuilding training organized by MPANZI, with support from eminent friends, Andy blanch and Bill Elliot. The participants identified the following objectives for the training:

1. To deepen our understanding of what conflict is- definition, types, causes, effects.
2. To explore some conflicts and violence in our communities.
3. To gain understanding of the key component of conflict resolution.
4. To consolidate our understanding of peace.

Participants were eager to learn about each other's cultures, gain skills and build relationships across cultures and religions.

The training was conducted in both English and Swahili languages.



ABOUT MPANZI

MPANZI strives to promote development and peace in 4 rural villages of Southwestern Kenya among the Maasai and Gusii ethnic communities through education, empowerment and improved health and livelihoods.

Conflict Mapping

Participants explored the notion of perception through an icebreaking exercise describing illusion images in groups of three people who had not met before. Each image had two different pictures. Some participants saw both images clearly; others had difficulty seeing the second image, while others anguished to see anything at all, even when they tried

carefully. Drawing on this exercise, the concept of conflict was introduced.

A brainstorming session followed where participants defined conflict in various ways, including the refusal or inability to accept other people's opinions, inappropriate interpretations and manipulation, misunderstanding and violence. The

participants identified different types of familial, institutional, political and tribal conflicts in the village, resulting in land disputes, cultural bigotry, hatred, violence against women and the scramble for the control of natural resources and wildlife.

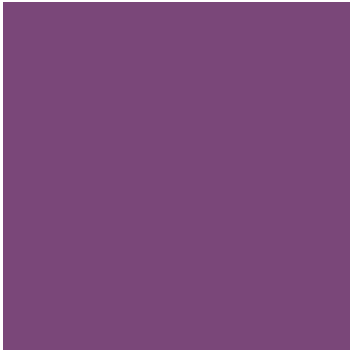
The facilitator summarized the concepts in conflict and introduced conflict mapping tool for analysis.

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Key elements of conflict mapping discussed were: a) the historical, political, economic and socio-cultural context, b) the conflict prone areas, c) causes of the conflict, and d) actors – main, secondary, invisible (particularly women), spoilers – their interests, goals,

relations and positions. Participants then grouped into inter-ethnic, mixed gender groups and undertook a conflict mapping exercise, where they created a conflict profile based on these elements. The different groups presented their conflict profiles at the plenary's large group.



Building Peace

Inner Peace, Communal Harmony

A short exercise on “my shield” was used to transition into discussions on peacebuilding. Participants took a quiet moment to reflect on self—who am I, my skills, ambitions, fame and why I am. A peace builder must have a grip with self, strive for inner peace, and promote peace in personal goals. What is it within me that might “shield” me and hold me back as a peace builder? was a question for personal reflection. Participants had a quiet moment of self-conflict mapping and inner reflection on personal peace.

The African concept of Ubuntu, I am

because we are, formed the basis for further discussion on community peacebuilding. What did that really entail and why was it important to advance peacebuilding in rural villages? Again, participants worked together in groups and discussed how the conflict profiles they presented would be transformed and peace attained. Reports were presented at the plenary session.

The facilitator led further discussions at plenary on peacebuilding approaches including conflict prevention, negotiation,

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relationship building, intergenerational strategies for human infrastructure, trauma healing, building harmony and social fabric and promoting inter-religious and inter-cultural understanding.

Next Steps, in Faith & Hope

Based on the day's discussions, participants spent time, following a shared meal, to prepare joint plans for action for peace. A wide range of practical activities and initiatives were proposed in the plans for action:

- ❖ Reproduction of similar training in local places of worship and communities
- ❖ Cross-boarder friendship and relationship building
- ❖ Family and school-based initiatives that engage children and youth in harmonious relations
- ❖ Sharing religious or cultural festivities among different religious groups or ethnic communities

Participants requested for facilitation and support from Mpanzi to coordinate their efforts

Peace Villages

to promote peace in the community, particularly at the critical time when Kenya was about to face another election and the economic and livelihoods challenges were enormous.

Drawing from their religious teachings and cultural philosophies on faith, participants affirmed their commitment and shared responsibility for peace. They expressed appreciation to the Maasai people for hosting the day's activities and recommended another training this time to be hosted by the Gusii ethnic community.

An enthusiastic leadership team has been established. Mpanzi has sowed a seed of peace to be nurtured to maturity.

I am,
because
You are

- African Ubuntu—
notion on 'being
community'

Deepest appreciation to Andy Blanch and Bill Elliot for supporting this work; and to all facilitators and participants for enthusiastic leadership. Training design and report by Pam and Jackie Ogega.

