



WARRIORS TO PEACE GUARDIANS FRAMEWORK KENYA

Overview

A unique partnership of Kenyan and international volunteer organizations, pastoralist communities, and Kenyan county government have come together to design a project to address deadly and intractable pastoralist violence. This project builds on the success of the Laikipia Peace Caravan and Warriors to Peace Guardians-Baringo Initiative, and applies and develops the most effective proven strategies in a variety of new contexts. Mediators Beyond Borders (MBB) members participate as catalysts, mentors, trainers, and coordinators who support the development of a strong pastoralist network that can effectively self-manage conflict at the grassroots.

The Kenyan Initiative team consists of the following contributing organizations:

- Mediators Beyond Borders (MBB)
- Peace Guardians Core (PGC) Group
- Peace Guardians (Local Kenyan volunteers)
- Rotary clubs (Kenya & U.S.)
- Local government and police
- Regional government and security
- National government

Context

For pastoralists (nomadic herders) in the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya, harsh conditions threaten their lives and their herds, which are often the sole source of livelihood. Traditionally, warriors who kept the group safe and who rustled cattle when needed were celebrated, as this tribe protection and livestock raiding often have meant survival. However, more modern conditions – easy access to weapons, arbitrary boundaries, disappearing water and grazing due to climate change – have escalated the violence within those traditions, resulting in widespread death and destruction for these communities.

Shrinking resources to keep the herds alive disrupts cooperative grazing patterns and pits these herding groups against each other, and the resulting revenge cycles persist an overall lack of security and development. The social, political and environmental changes have also brought the pastoralists into closer contact and conflict with farmers in villages. The warriors' desperation, high mobility, and skill with weapons make them easy targets for recruiting into the violent commercial rustling markets and in many instances the warriors develop into agents of corrupt politicians who seek to accomplish political goals through violence.

While much of Kenyan society is generating economic success, it rarely reaches the most rural pastoralists, even under devolution. Remote arid and semi-arid areas continue to lack access to water, much less sanitation, schools or health care. Inadequate road infrastructure keeps many pastoralists isolated from towns with services and other possibilities for livelihood. Frequently written off as violent, backward people, rural pastoralists often cannot count on police response to replace violent self-protection, nor has there been consistent political action to address the severe development deficits in pastoral lands. Pastoralists remain locked in a cycle of scarcity and violence with little opportunity to imagine any other option.

Rationale: Building on success

The Kenya Initiative was formally established in 2012. Members of MBB made multiple trips to assess how MBB could contribute to pastoralist peacebuilders. In 2014, a team of 17 pastoralist and MBB-KI co-researchers participated in a participatory action research project to determine what makes pastoralist-led peacebuilding effective and sustainable. The discovery phase of the research revealed that pastoralist peace caravans are a unique vehicle for local dialogue on peacemaking and peacebuilding, and MBB could bring multiple requisite skills and expertise to support pastoralists in scaling up their peacebuilding activities.

The research focused on the most successful of these efforts, the Laikipia Peace Caravan (LPC). The study found that pastoralists are highly networked, which the LPC capitalized on. After the 2009 Kanampiu Massacre, a network of pastoralist men and women – including former warriors – who have gained status by working in urban centers (“the professionals”) mobilized from the involved ethnic groups and began directly visiting communities affected by the massacre. Everyone involved in this caravan were volunteers with no external resources. They went directly to the ground and spoke to the people with the power of those who have “been there” and as “sons and daughters” of the communities. They modeled co-existence and inclusivity; with unique access, they convened and guided warring groups to deescalate the conflict and replace revenge cycles with joint decision-making bodies, early warning systems, and new norms that celebrate peaceful conduct and punish rustling. The research identified outcomes sustained in Laikipia for five years, including:

- The number of conflict-related deaths dropped to almost zero
- Communities now help return lost or stolen livestock to other communities
- Weekly inter-ethnic peace committee meetings involving women, elders and youth discuss issues, share information, and largely use restorative justice processes to resolve disputes, keep the peace and manage criminal activities
- Children were able to return to school and new schools have been built
- The communities are growing wealthier and economic activity has increased
- Peace guardians respond to early signs of conflict and have become peacebuilders for surrounding communities

These outcomes reflect peacebuilders’ greatest goal, not just the absence of fighting, but **positive peace** – where relationships are restored, social systems serve the entire inter-ethnic community, and there is constructive resolution of conflict.

While more development is still needed to solidify the positive peace in Laikipia West, the progress made to date is a firm foundation. This WTPG Framework is designed to take the next step: **spread a positive peace**.

Laikipia is bordered by Baringo, Isiolo and Samburu counties, which share pastoralist ethnic groups and conflict drivers. Insecurity in one quickly becomes a threat to all. The pastoralist networks are uniquely positioned to transform pastoralist violence cycles in these three counties. Supported by the public-private partnership proposed in this Framework, the Peace Guardian Core (PGC) will use what has been learned in the LPC research and our recent United States Institute of Peace (USIP) funded peacebuilding in Baringo to expand a network of peace guardians throughout the four county region, and link grassroots peace work to national and decentralized government structures for development and effective, integrated conflict prevention and response, thereby generating a positive peace in remote pastoralist areas.

Objectives

- Increase the skills and number of pastoralist peace guardians who prevent and manage violence in their communities and teach this to other pastoralist groups
- Generate development and improve livelihoods for pastoralists to remove key conflict drivers and promote positive peace
- Create civil society focus on ensuring that the government's peace infrastructure functions effectively and is coordinated with grassroots peace activity
- Improve police and security response to violence and crime in pastoralist communities
- Disseminate peace-sustaining practices from Laikipia West to areas of pastoralist violence in Baringo, Samburu and Isiolo counties
- Increase the coordination of peace-sustaining practices across the four counties of Laikipia, Baringo, Samburu and Isiolo at the County government and grassroots levels

Activities

The project team will accomplish its objectives through the following activities:

Strengthen and expand the cadre of community peace guardians: The Laikipia community noted the need for a larger cadre of community members with deeper skills and knowledge of conflict resolution. This is being created through a cascaded conflict resolution training and mentoring system. MBB trains the PGC, which evolves according to the ethnic mix being targeted, and other peace guardian professionals in advanced techniques such as managing public dialogue, trauma-sensitive facilitation, neurophysiology, eliminating bias, achieving positive peace, and training methodology. Then PGC trainers and MBB jointly design context specific curriculums for the PGC to carry forward to establish a four county network of community peace guardians. Benefits of all trainings are extended by all trainers mentoring their trainees throughout the project's life.

Development to reduce conflict drivers: The project will address these conflict drivers through three means:

- Civic education to identify government sources of funds for development, women and youth, along with advocacy skills training for communities to effectively access those funds
- Building improved practices for pastoralists to get more out of grazing areas, diversify feed sources, improve livestock health and hardiness, and retain more profit from the livestock value chain, all of which will improve livelihoods with the existing herds (an expertise of the Rotary Club of Ngong Hills).

Responsive peace infrastructure and security: The project, led in this activity by Local Capacities for Peace, will map civil society in the four counties. This will identify the key civil society actors and their roles and relationship to the government-sponsored District Peace Committee and any other government entities responsible for peace. Based on the mapping, the team will recommend, and work to put in place, means to strengthen those relationships and coordination. There is also much distrust of police and security, which leads to pastoralists not communicating early warning signs and the police failing to respond to pastoralist violence. The project will work with communities and police and facilitate a series of meetings and activities to build trust between these ethnic groups and police and security forces. This would be dovetailed with peacebuilding efforts and support more positive engagement of police and national security services in such activities.

Coordinate county governments: Kenya is at an extraordinary political moment, barely more than four years into implementing a fully restructured, decentralized government. With power in many new hands, there is risk of power competition between counties, but handled well, this can be turned to coordination and responsiveness to constituent needs. **Perhaps no need transcends political borders more than security.** The project will convene targeted officials from the four counties and facilitate planning to increase community and pastoralist security and development.

Building peace: MBB will support the PGC to develop new networks of peace guardians in conflict areas. This will include training new peace guardians in the pastoralist peacebuilding process, convening and training methods, and the newly recruited peace guardians will join the rest of the project team in mapping conflicts, identifying the existing peace network, designing meetings and developing peace messages for each new conflict area. Locations and implementation activities will be determined based on funding and conflict assessment. The peace guardians and the PGC will convene intra- and inter-ethnic meetings to:

- Address grievances and seek reconciliation between professionals, peace guardians and between ethnic communities
- Shift attitudes, behaviors and ways of resolving conflict within key conflict areas
- Support warring communities to agree to a set of processes and norms to sustain peace
- Create inter-ethnic conflict prevention and management structures, as described above

The PGC and MBB will simultaneously coordinate county governments and convene county elites to reduce political incitement and enhance development to reduce conflict drivers.

As peace is restored and agreements are reached, MBB and the PGC will work with partners to help:

- Strengthen relationships with area peace committees and police
- Improve productivity of livelihood-critical herds
- Educate ethnic communities to jointly access government development funds

The PGC and local peace guardians will be mentored by MBB to repeat these activities in conflict areas of Baringo, Isiolo and Samburu counties for sustainable, self-managed peace. MBB's direct interaction towards these objectives is in its roles as catalyst, connector, trainer of trainers, mentors, and overall facilitator of the process until the local capacity reaches the tipping point towards self-generation.

The first phase of this activity has been completed successfully in Baringo East, with funding support by the US Institute of Peace. Sixty-three new peace guardians have been trained and are actively sustaining a newfound peace in their areas, with the support of the PGC, MBB and the Laikipia Peace Committee.

How Each Organization Participates in Partnership

The Peace Guardian Core is a leadership group of multi-ethnic pastoralist professionals, mobilizing a network of pastoralists working in Kenya's urban centers and volunteering to create and maintain peace in their home ethnic communities. Its goals are to promote human security and conflict resolution, eradicate cattle rustling, and develop harmony and peaceful coexistence in all pastoralist regions. Since its members began responding to inter-ethnic conflict in 2009, members have participated in peace caravans in Laikipia, Samburu, Baringo, Turkana, Narok, Nakuru, Tana River, and Isiolo counties. They continue to work to create early warning networks, quick response to crises and establishing inter-ethnic committees to maintain peace and cooperation.

Mediators Beyond Borders International is a global organization whose multidisciplinary volunteers build local skills for peace. Its Kenya Initiative has been engaged, by invitation, since 2009 and its US, Kenyan, Canadian and UK members integrate innovative techniques with traditional and local methods, adapt their approach to the host country context, design and initiate projects, and mentor local partners until they feel confident to take full responsibility for sustaining activities.

Rotary Club of Ngong Hills – Kenya, and other clubs and districts within Rotary International. The Rotary Clubs have a unique interest in advancing international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

Local Capacities for Peace International is a Kenyan nonprofit organization that promotes and strengthens participatory, conflict-sensitive programming in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding realms.

Support of the full project, or of discrete activities, is welcome. Thank you for this opportunity to share our ideas and we welcome your feedback and support.

We invite you to contact the MBB Kenya Initiative team leader for further information:

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