



*Life &
Peace*
INSTITUTE



STORIES OF CHANGE

Connecting
Across Divides:
Youth as
Drivers of
Peace
2018-2019





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Introduction

Youth are both perpetrators and victims of violence. They are often subject to human and civil rights abuses, in particular by security services, leading to a strained relationship with police and other organs of the state. Through previous research by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) titled [‘Local Definitions and Experiences of Insecurity, Including Violent Extremism, Perceptions and Relationships’](#), youth identified police harassment as a leading cause of insecurity in Nairobi, Mander

and Wajir. In response to this, in 2018 and 2019 LPI implemented the Connecting Across Divides: Youth as Drivers of Peace project in collaboration with the Mander Peace Development Committee and Wajir Peace Development Agency.¹ The project worked in Nairobi’s urban settlements (Eastleigh, Majengo, and Mlango Kubwa) and urban and rural communities in the North-Eastern counties of Mander (Mander Township and Rhamu) and Wajir (Wajir Township and Griftu).

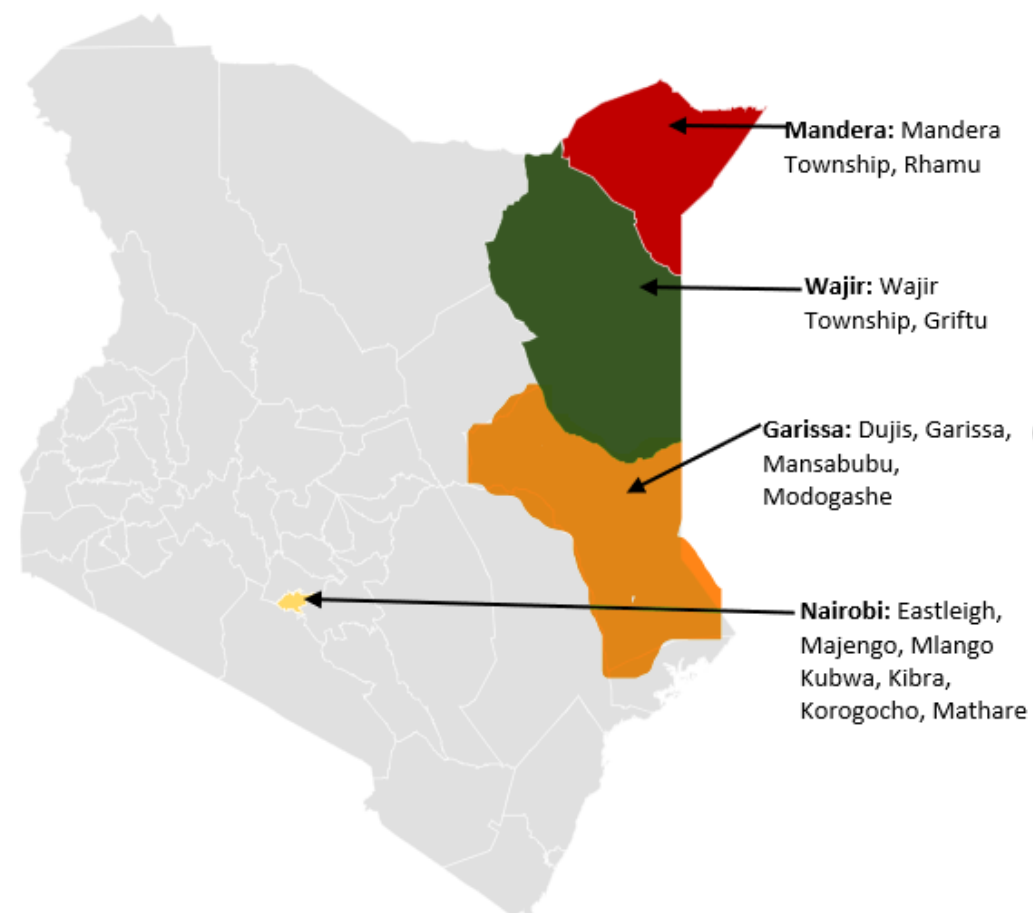


Figure 1: Project sites across Kenya

Aiming at strengthening locally driven, inclusive, and sustainable peace and stability in Kenya, the project aimed to address multiple sources of insecurity including social, political and economic exclusion, lack of inclusion in decision making and the absence of spaces for collective action and communication with authorities, and strained relations with security services related to experience of human rights violations. This was done through a bespoke peacebuilding approach. Through Sustained Dialogue (SD), young people identified some of the deep-rooted political, cultural, and socio-economic

challenges that affect them and took action to address them. The project brought together diverse youth across identity lines to (re)build positive social ties, contributing to challenging stereotypes and deconstructing negative relational patterns. Beyond that, young women and men were supported to establish constructive relationships with security actors as well as with policymakers and further initiate youth-to-youth collaborative problem-solving actions to address the root causes of insecurity and conflict in their wider communities.



508 Male



339 Female



847 Participants & Moderators



17 Peace Action

The process led to a number of critical changes in behaviours and practices including breaking down barriers between divided groups; increased awareness of peacebuilding needs leading to community engagement; improved relationships between youth and security actors; youth championing of responses to insecurity through, for example, creating safe spaces for nonviolent communication on addressing insecurity; economic empowerment through entrepreneurship; personal

transformation leading to youth taking up of leadership roles in their communities.

This booklet captures stories of change as shared by the young women and men who were part of this project – as a testimony to the agency of young people and their role in peace and security issues on the African continent.

A Synopsis of Sustained Dialogue Methodology

Sustained Dialogue: An Organic Relationship-Building Process

Sustained Dialogue is an approach proposed and applied by the US diplomat, the late Dr. Harold H. Saunders, as a conflict resolution tool. Saunders stressed the need to build and strengthen relationships at the individual level, as this will create a conducive environment for improved relationships between adversary communities. To build and improve relationships between adversary parties, Saunders suggested that a dialogue that is sustained over a period of time is likely to influence a positive change. Saunders described the five stages that Sustained Dialogue takes, and noted that the dialogue begins when participants are able to identify their issues. It involves a facilitated, structured and sustained face-to-face meeting between groups of people with different identities. The method seeks to transform

violent conflicts into constructive relationships, especially among groups that have been engaged in protracted deep-rooted conflicts. These transformed relationships will allow for informed, constructive, community change. When dialogue is sustained, participants will position themselves in a safe and more neutral space where they can progressively develop intergroup competencies such as:

- listening carefully to others,
- identifying and naming their realities,
- start showing sympathy to others with a different opinion/view from their perspective

What Does Sustained Dialogue Look Like?

- Multiple dialogue groups of 8 to 15 participants that meet for several months, for at least ten meetings
- Two well-trained moderators lead a dialogue group of their peers
- Organizers support groups logistically throughout the months of dialogue and help create interest in broader communities
- SD is sustained in three main ways:

1. Time & Duration: SD groups meet consistently at an appointed every two weeks for two hours.
2. Participants & Moderators: Each SD group maintains the same participants and moderators.
3. Continuity of Conversation: Each meeting is designed to continue where the last ended. Below is a description of the five stages of Sustained Dialogue³.

1. The project funded by the European Union (EU) and co-funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through the Swedish Mission Council (SMC)

2. For more information on Sustained Dialogue, see <https://life-peace.org/approach-methods>

3. Adapted from Sustained Dialogue institute. www.SustainedDialogue.org

Chapter One: Personal Transformation

Peaceful within and without

“
The other women
were left saying,
'siwezi amini huyu ni
Safia ametulia.' This
means that, 'I can't
believe this is Safia
who is calm.'”

Safia, a community health volunteer in Mlango Kubwa shares that she had anger management issues. This was not until she joined SD that she realised that she had to work on it for the sake of peaceful co-existence with the rest of the community. She narrates her personal transformation journey.

“My name is Safia, a 27-year-old married woman and a mother of two. I am also a community health worker. I reside in Mlango Kubwa in Mathare, Nairobi I joined SD as a participant. I knew about LPI in 2018 through a friend of mine who lives in Eastleigh. I was later invited for orientation at KCITI. In 2019, I was made a moderator and since then I have changed for the better through LPI. Before joining SD, I was very aggressive, hot-tempered and violent. I was often involved in fights but through SD and listening to the stories of other SD members, I started changing. In fact, at the plot where I stay many got shocked from my new behavioural change and started asking about SD. I remember one incident when

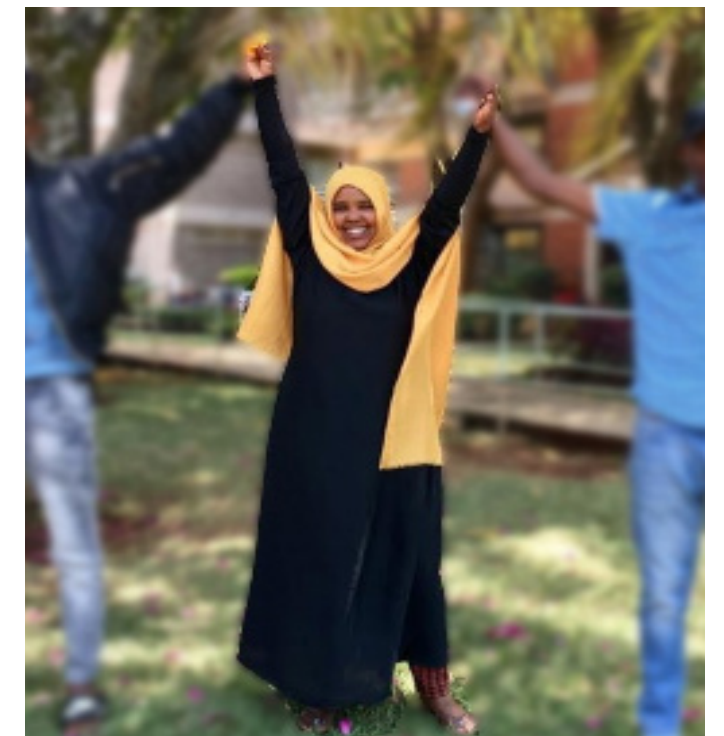
My husband said, “Heeeh! huyu ni Sofi

anatukanwa na ametulia tu amenyamaza?

Hii ni miujiza kweli!” This means, “Waaah! Is

this Sofi who is being abused and she is just

calm? This is really a miracle!”



I woke up early to fetch water and I lined my jerrycan as the first person. Then one woman came and threw them away claiming I am always the first. I told her to go ahead and fetch then return my cans so that I fetch after her. All in the queue were surprised because previously this would have been a confrontation that would have ended up in violence. Another incidence was a day when I was washing my clothes and they were many. I have my hanging lines for clothes which my neighbours also use when I am not washing. On this day one neighbour saw me washing and he went ahead and used my hanging lines. When I told him, I will be using them he answered me rudely and said I can do what I want he will use the lines. Previously, I would have thrown his clothes on the ground and started a fight but on this occasion, I kept my clothes and waited for his clothes to dry without answering him back. The neighbours were surprised that I could let that pass so calmly. It was very shocking that I'm abused by a person and I do not react negatively. My takeaway from LPI is personal change, knowledge and skills. I am very grateful; I gained a lot from LPI. My story of change came out of SD. My change brought a very big impact on the people I live with and the community. We also started a youth group called Infinite Dreams with other moderators and SD participants and our mission is to mentor fellow youth in our communities. The first people to witness to my personal change were my husband and my mother. Now that the project is over, I'm very grateful because now I am a proud ambassador of peace and positive change. Thank you very much LPI for the change and for making me a Peace Ambassador.”

Stage 5

Now!

Individual and Collective Action

Act!

Take scenario to larger groups for implementation

Continually ask: How are we doing?

Stage 4

How?

Brainstorming Action

What resources do we have to move in that direction?

What steps need to be taken?

Who can take those steps?

Arrange a scenario of mutually reinforcing steps

Stage 3

Why?

Identifying and Analyzing Problems

Identify relationships that cause the problem

Identify options for transforming those relationships

Weigh those options

Agree on a direction for action

Stage 2

What?

Building Trust and Exchanging Experiences

Set the tone and habits of the group

Participants share problems that concern them

Participants learn to talk openly about what really bothers them

Participants name a problem to focus on together

Stage 1

Who?

Deciding and Committing to Engage

Decide who needs to be at the table in order to lead to change

Identify willing and appropriate participants and agree to meet

Reach an understanding of the nature, purpose, and rules of the dialogue

Figure 2: Stages of Sustained Dialogue

From an addict to a community leader

Ahmed's search for acceptance took him into drug abuse to fit among his peers. He was selected to join SD when he was at his lowest moments in life and had given up hope of attaining his dreams. Being recognised as a leader made him take a U-turn and he realised he could have positive roles in the community and gain acceptance as he narrates his journey.

"I always feared being arrested by the police but thank God this never happened. I had reached a state of despair and knew that I did not amount to anything. One day, the area chief approached me to join a project that had been started for the youth. I accepted reluctantly. I was taken through a training to become a leader of a group of 12 participants. I could not believe it! I thought this was a big mistake! Anyway, I took up the challenge and after a few sessions, I surprised myself! I never knew I had any leadership qualities. It surprised me whenever other youth came to seek advice from me. This made me change and quit drugs. I needed to be an inspiration to my team in a positive manner. This is the best thing that ever happened to me. I have never regretted. The benefits are enormous.

In SD, I gained a number of skills, ranging from facilitation to public speaking. This gave me an opportunity to work in a local media station. From there, I knew I was capable of doing so much and influencing many young people positively. I left the local media station and became a freelance journalist. I learnt how to record and edit my work. In SD, I



developed a lot of confidence. As a result, I managed to approach one of the nominated MPs, Nasri Sahal and explained my passion for videography and she bought me a camera worth Kes. 150,000. I have since started a Youtube account called Stingers South C. I work with six youth who can act and I record and share the clips. In most cases we share messages highlighting issues in our community and so far our messages have reached 197,000 subscribers. I am not the same person today and I attribute it to SD."

From street life to street business

Shem has known street life throughout his life and the ills that come with it such as crime, violence, arrests and being downtrodden in society. Joining SD gave him an opportunity of being loved, accepted and living a decent life by starting a legal business.

In Nairobi, Shem, a male SD participant living on the streets of Eastleigh was able to start a second-hand clothes business with the resources that he receives as transport reimbursement after the SD sessions. The profit from his business, he shared, was instrumental in paying for his wife's medical expenses during the delivery of their first child.

"I have lived on the streets of Eastleigh with other street families since I was seven years old. Thinking about my



future, together with other youth living on the streets, we formed a group that engages in garbage collection as our livelihood activity to keep us from engaging in crime. I was born in Kisumu but my parents separated when I was still young and I was left under the care of a stepmother who mistreated me and I ran away when I was seven. I never got an opportunity to join school. Life in the streets is difficult and sometimes I engaged in crime and ended up being taken to juvenile centres then back to the streets. When I was 20 years old, I joined a gang group that engaged in robbery with violence and

in one instance I was arrested and imprisoned for three years. I have been arrested several times. At one time I started selling illegal alcoholic brew to make a living and I was arrested, charged and imprisoned for six months. I was released from prison after completing my jail term and a friend introduced me to the LPI peacebuilding project in Eastleigh – that was focusing on youth dialogues. I joined the process and through peer to peer interaction, SD made me change from crime and violence by giving me ideas of alternative ways to earn a living. I realised there are jobs that I can do freely without fear

'usifikirie sana chenye unataka
kufanya, fanya chenye unafikiria'-
don't think too much of what you
want to start to do but just start
doing what you are thinking.'

of being arrested. Since then I avoid people who engage in crime. I got the idea of selling clothes when we were discussing the problem of unemployment during the SD sessions. I decided to start buying second-hand clothes for children from Gikomba market and selling them in Eastleigh. During one of the capacity building sessions, a facilitator said when a business idea comes to your mind, just go ahead and execute it. From there I decided to start my business.

I started my business of selling clothes with the Kes. 500 I got as transport reimbursement and each week I can make up to Kes 1000 in profits. With the profit I make from this business, I am able to support my family and I am assured of a daily meal.

When I joined SD, I was not confident enough to talk to people but now I know how to talk and interact with different people without fear of being discriminated against because of my background. SD members have given me a lot of emotional, social, and material support. When I lost my stepmother, all the SD members supported me financially by contributing towards my transport to travel to Kisumu to attend the funeral. This was the first time I got support from other people and it was a good amount. I felt loved and appreciated as one of the members of the SD family. I am grateful for being part of the SD process as it has changed my life."

Chapter Two: Connecting Across Divides

“This programme has been a blessing to us” – the perspective of a police officer

Despite government efforts to change the image of the security actors from a force to a service and implementing policies on police reforms, the relationship with the youth, has remained sour, marred with suspicion and mistrust. Efforts to bridge this gap through



“This relationship has made the security actors realise the importance of involving the youth in security matters. For instance, in December 2019, the Officer Commanding Station (OCS) called the youth to sensitise them on the importance of observing the law and knowing their role in the security of their communities. The security officer in charge of traffic also sensitised the youth on traffic rules and the proper documents they need to have in the event that they get into issues such as accidents. This is because a number of the young people have gotten into the ‘Boda Boda’ (motor-bike

the project ‘Connecting across Divides’ has borne fruit. This shows the need to have concerted effort between the government and the civil society in narrowing the gap that exists and thus, strengthening security mechanisms in the community.

“I appreciate that the youth are now free to report cases of sexual and gender-based violence to security actors and they are now being addressed,” Suleiman, a male police officer who has been involved in relationship building between the youth and the security actors, says. “The project has helped change the negative perception between the youth and security actors. Previously, the youth and the community feared the security actors and the relationship was sour with a lot of suspicion about each other. As I sit at the gender desk, to date, SD youth have reported 10 cases of sexual abuse, four are in court and six are under investigation.”

“Prior to this initiative, the youth feared to share information with security actors. They always imagined that if they do, they could easily land on the wrong side of the law. There was a perception that all youth were criminals and that all security actors were corrupt and extort money from the public whenever cases were presented to them. There was a general belief that the wrongdoers would buy their way out and so the youth had no confidence reporting anything to them. However, the interaction during the dialogues and capacity building sessions, allowed us to understand each other and create networks. There is a lot of information sharing currently.”

riding) business.”

“Huu mradi umekuwa baraka kwetu” (“this programme has been a blessing to us”), noted Suleiman. “The youth are friendly to the security officers these days and we play soccer together at the police camp. This is a new thing – outsiders are never allowed into the police camp and they fear going there. Since this engagement began, at least one youth has been recruited in the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) after recommendation from the security officers.”

Connecting clans through the establishment of the Women Empowerment and Youth Organisation (WEYO)



Halima, an SD moderator in Mandera, and three of her SD group members, Ahmed, Mohammed and Hassan, mooted the idea of starting a vocational training centre during an SD action planning session which would bring different conflicting clans together as they attain different skills.

“We reached out to six other participants, and jointly established WEYO, which offers beauty therapy (facial make-up, henna, massage, hairdressing), tailoring, and computer classes to female and male youth in Mandera. We run the institution using funds raised from the tuition fees that is paid by the trainees. As of December 2019,

we had enrolled 263 youth in WEYO with 60 scheduled to graduate in March 2020. This initiative is anchored on strengthening cross-clan cohesion and brings together representatives from diverse clans including clans who are a minority in the area, and persons living with disability.” As Halima states, “SD influenced me to be more inclusive as it gave me an opportunity to interact with persons from other clans and brought me to the realisation that we are connectors, and that we have surpassed divisive clan conflicts.”

SD helped us start a youth group to support ourselves and the community



Fikra Moja youth group are members that connected after meeting during SD sessions and they realised that they could come together and do something useful in their community and change the common narrative that Christians and Muslims cannot work together.

Here is Dennis from Eastleigh, an alumnus of LPI's Sustained Dialogue process as both a moderator and participant, proudly holding the trophy after successfully scooping first position in the entrepreneurial issue competition.

"I am among the founder members of Fikra Moja youth group. Fikra Moja (meaning 'same mind') Self Help Group was formed at the end of 2018 by SD participants from Eastleigh. Several groups were discussing the issue of unemployment and we decided to come together and seek a solution. We moved the dialogue to our community 'base' [informal meeting spaces for youth] and decided to address issues that had been raised during the SD sessions concerning youth redundancy, and the lack of role models in the community.

something that can generate income, is self-sustaining and will also employ other youth in Eastleigh. This was also with the aim of reducing the level of crime by engaging youth who lack economic opportunities in the community.

The twelve male and female group members (8 female; 4 male) started making small contributions of Kes. 200 per person weekly for six months. We identified a niche and opportunity in the community that had not been exploited and decided to venture into it – a laundry business! We looked for a good space, took the risk and started the business.

Fikra Moja's mission is to create employment for the youth in Eastleigh and since its inception 12 youth have so far been employed. The organisation envisions engaging at least 10% of youth in Eastleigh in cleaning services and home delivery around Nairobi and by extension creating safe spaces where youth can meet and have dialogues on issues affecting them in their communities.

We decided to lead by example and thought of initiating

Since we could not afford a washing machine, we began

by handwashing the clothes, doing-pickups, drop-offs and ironing the clothes at a fair price. We also offered cleaning services for carpets in the madrassas since we had a good rapport with Muslim clerics, teachers and Imams.

Towards the end of 2019, we got an opportunity to participate in the 'smart hustle challenge' which was a peace action organised by some SD groups. We presented our ideas and were shortlisted to move to the next stage. We participated in the second-day challenge and we were again shortlisted for the quarter-finals. We succeeded and got to the finals where our business plan won the top prize of Kes 50 000, a trophy and branded t-shirts for the members of the group.

With this prize, we were able to implement our business plan by buying equipment for our laundry business which

included a washing machine, an iron and ironing board, washing troughs and buckets and sewing machines to repair torn clothes. With our savings, we have acquired a carpet washer, and a three thousand litre water tank.

This boosted our business because we are now able to increase our cleaning services, and have members engage in other activities such as doing repairs of clothes. We have experienced growth and are able to pay some of our members.

We look forward to keeping the SD spirit and conversations going on. We are glad that we are now a team and able to move on with our business and achieve our dream of job creation for the youth in our community."

I found a life partner in SD



"My name is William, a 24-year-old from Majengo. I work as a part-time DJ and collect garbage and wash vehicles as part of the Jijue Ujue youth group initiative. Through SD I met my wife and I am happy. She comes from Mlango Kubwa and if it was not for SD, I would not have met her.

Previously I used to fear people from Mlango Kubwa because it was believed they were all criminals. Through our interactions during SD dialogues, I found out that they are just like us and my mentality has now changed.

SD has been a very good platform for me. I have made friends from other areas like Eastleigh and Mlango Kubwa and I have also learnt a lot. One of the topics we discussed as a group was unemployment. The discussion inspired me to think of what else I could for a living, and I got the idea of selling eggs and potatoes and I am now saving towards raising capital to buy trolleys.

The more we interacted in dialogue, the faster we learnt, as opposed to being in a formal classroom. I will miss the company we had, the joy and the brotherhood and sisterhood we shared during the SD sessions."

William's world rotated around his home area and the stereotypes of other areas dominated his mind until when he joined SD and discovered the reality that most areas have similar issues. This changed the way he related with others and this became a gateway to finding his soul-mate who comes from a different area and a different religion.

Chapter Three: Nurturing Youth Leadership

A community advocate through SD

There has been a general stereotype that Somalia girls are shy and cannot talk before people; a theory that Hafsa has disapproved. Joining SD as a moderator and taking lead in different peace activities, made her discover her potential as a peace activist at the local, national and international arenas. Her story shows that young women have great potential if they are mentored and nurtured in their dreams.

“I was not very articulate especially in understanding and following up on issues systematically until they are resolved. Now, the story is different. I understand the issues in my community better, I have networks within Eastleigh and beyond and I have become a strong advocate in my community and globally,” says Hafsa Ahmed, 27 years, a resident of Eastleigh, Nairobi. Hafsa is a peacebuilder, mentor, youth leader, and entrepreneur. She is passionate about community service.

“Previously I engaged in community work but only for Eastleigh North and mainly through social media and the chief’s office.

I got to know about LPI through our area chief, Chief Njoka in 2018 who was asked to propose names of moderators. Being engaged in the project has been an eye opener for me and I have learned the importance of teamwork, how crucial it is for the community to own a project and accept it, inclusivity, building mutual respect, accountability, but above all I believe my biggest takeaway has been serving communities with diligence and dignity. Being an SD moderator, I have learned how to articulate issues clearly. I have come to know the importance of advocating for causes in my community. I have sharpened my communication skills and I am now present and keen when conversing with people to understand their perspective and do away with unnecessary conflicts. I have gained the confidence to speak in front of people without fear, for instance in 2019 I had the opportunity to meet and build relationships with local administrators and police officers that serve in our community. That friendship has enabled me to engage the local leaders and police whenever there is an incident of insecurity, and freely access and share information.

I have made milestones in advocacy, having presented issues at different platforms. To mention a few:

- Making a presentation to the UN Security Council: On 2 October 2019, I had the rare opportunity to address the UN Security Council. I shared my story and that of my community as a peacebuilder and Sustained Dialogue moderator to the UN Security Council (UNSC). I also made some recommendations on youth, peace and security.



Recommendations from this address were later adopted by South Africa. This ignited my interest in policy work and I delved deeper into reading and understanding existing policies on youth, women and peacebuilding. This experience earned me a new name in my community, ‘Hafsa wa UN’. This was shared in a community blog, and the local administrators and the community really appreciated and loved the fact that I addressed the UNSC and shared Eastleigh’s story on such a huge platform. The Member of Parliament, Yusuf Hassan, called me and was interested to know more about what I was doing in the community and has since engaged me in the constituency meetings.

- Experience-sharing: I had an opportunity to attend a ‘Gloco-loco’ meeting in Sweden that brought together university students in Sweden who were designing a project to bring change in their communities. That experience gave me the idea of starting a community-based organisation back in Eastleigh that would nurture and promote the talent of the youth and enlighten the community

on issues affecting youth. I was also invited to share my experience during the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) from 12 to 14 November 2019 in Nairobi. I was one of the panellists and I was glad to share practical experiences of girls in Eastleigh at such a global forum.

- Community participation: I was selected to join Nyumba Kumi, a local community policing initiative that looks into security and community welfare. This has helped me articulate issues affecting the youth in my community, pursue matters of concern and challenge decisions made by the business community that only consider their interest and not that of the larger population.
- Initiatives: My 11 friends from the Sustained Dialogue and I have registered a community-based organisation called Infinite Dreams. The organisation uses the SD model to empower our community on various areas of peacebuilding, governance, and entrepreneurship. We want to amplify the voices of our community in advocating for their rights and speaking against issues such as drug use, crime and early marriages. Our organisation also intends to

revive the arts and sports sector for the youth, which has been neglected.

- Advocating to address gender-based violence: In September 2019, a female SD participant asked me to help her friend who was in high school and was being sexually abused by her uncle. I rescued the girl and now she lives in a safe house. She was able to do her form four examination without fear of dropping out of school. When the case came up, the family wanted to cover up and defend the perpetrator. They involved many people from their clan to avoid justice and sent me threats, but this did not deter me from following the case and supporting the girl in the safe house. I got a lawyer who pursued the case and the perpetrator was put behind the bars. I am hopeful that the girl will get support to pursue her college education and start her career. After this experience, I was approached by three other girls over sexual and gender based violence cases and I directed them to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an organisation that addresses cases of gender based violence, and they were assisted. This exposed me to the challenges that some girls go through without anyone to defend them.



This is just but a few of the many opportunities that have emerged as a result of being engaged in the Sustained Dialogue process. It has made me a very inquisitive person and intensified the urge to bring positive change in communities. My sister says that I ask a lot of questions and she jokes that LPI made me a detective!”

Sustained Dialogue has enabled us to stand tall



Nur appreciates having joined SD as a moderator since this gave him an opportunity to discover his leadership skills. It gave him a platform to network with other civil society organisations and plan for activities. This jump-started his career.

“I joined a project that was being supported by LPI that brought diverse youth together from different localities and clans in Wajir”, recalls Nur, an SD moderator in 2018. “It was my first time to be in the same meeting with security actors. This changed my perception about the security actors. I have always known them to be unfriendly and not concerned about issues affecting the youth. It was different in the joint meeting we [the youth] had with them. This was the start of my confidence building.”

As a moderator, the project gave him a chance to lead the dialogue sessions. “This contributed to me being recognised for my facilitation skills and I was invited to facilitate other sessions including speaking on behalf of the youth during the development of the County Action Plan (CAP) on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), peacebuilding trainings organised by the Kenya Red Cross focusing on the training of youth and parents on CVE. I am grateful to LPI for the capacity building training and the space to interact and build my confidence. This

has created room for me to share a platform with the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Devolution and the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands on emergency response in Wajir.

Today, the number of peacebuilders has increased in the Wajir community. The Sustained Dialogue gave a chance to female youth to participate in peace dialogues given that culturally, girls are never encouraged to take part in public forums. The confidence built has given the youth a platform to be recognised. Together with another SD moderator, Kadra, I was invited to address the taskforce of the Building Bridges Initiatives (BBI) on the perspectives of the youth, led by Hon. Yusuf Hajji, the Garissa Senator. The confidence I have to stand before people and articulate issues is as a result of the SD sessions that allowed us space to speak and build one another.

If you have had a chance to interact with the Somali community, then you will appreciate what I’m saying. The youth have no opportunity to participate in discussions, let alone share contributions regarding any issue in the community. On matters of conflict, only elders participate, according to the Somali culture. I feel so privileged that SD members have been allowed

to participate in the Al Fatah Council of Elders. In May and June 2019, together with Marian and Kadra, two female SD moderators, I was invited to participate in a meeting on resource conflicts between Wajir North and Eldas sub-counties on invitation of the elders that were mediating it. The youth encouraged them to dialogue and an inclusive community committee of 12 members was formed that included three women. They deliberated on how best to share the resources and the violence has now reduced. The chiefs in Wajir recognise our potential and have been keen to engage us in activities.

Today in Wajir, I am among the 10 members of Wajir Champions for Change and CVE Champions supported by Niwajibu Wetu (NIWETU) through the Rural Agency for Community Development and Assistance (RACIDA). I am in the committee that organises football tournaments between six sub-counties which also brings on board security actors.”

I now have my own Community Based Organisation

Salim has engaged with different organisations in his community which have implemented peacebuilding and CVE activities on a short term basis. He saw the need of having a permanent organisation that would enhance sustainability of the peace building work and have an entry point of working with the youth. The experience he gained as an intern with LPI and the other engagements with civil society actors, enabled him start Kamukunji Community Peace Network.

“In 2016, I was selected to join the LPI community dialogues and later the Sustained Dialogue process in Kamukunji, Nairobi. This was a turning point in my life. It is here where I learnt about peacebuilding and found real mentorship in leadership skills and on peace and security issues. Having been brought up in Majengo, I knew violence was the way to resolve any manner of conflict, however small. It was in these SD sessions that I learnt that there are nonviolent ways of resolving conflict – a skill I have embraced to date. In 2018, together with some of my colleagues in SD and in the community dialogues, I established a community organisation called Kamukunji Peace Network with a focus on prevention and countering violent extremism. Our motivation was to share the skills that we had acquired with other young people in the community as we get local solutions to the challenges that we face. I had realised that many organisations that received funding to address issues of peacebuilding, radicalisation and CVE, had little impact at the grassroots level. However, the approach that LPI uses is effective and we embraced it and this is what we are

using to date. It is out of this that I was able to get the award of Head of State Commendation in October 2018 during ‘Mashujaa’ (Heroes) day as a result of our impact in the community, a good relationship with the security actors and the Kenyan State. I owe all these to LPI. The sky is the limit.



SD has made me a community mobiliser and a youth mentor

Teresia led a life of begging in the streets and she grew with a lot of challenges as an orphan and bread winner. This affected her self-esteem and self-image and in turn suppressed her potential to assert herself in life. As an SD moderator, she listened to other participants’ stories which served as a backdrop for her to re-examine herself and have a positive outlook on life.

“My name is Teresia, I’m 29 years old and I’m married. I come from Mlango Kubwa and I am a firstborn in a family of four. We are orphans and I take care of my younger siblings too. I got to know about LPI when a friend of mine invited me for SD sessions where I was selected to become a moderator. Through the SD sessions I have gained a lot of skills such as moderating, leadership and conducting dialogue processes.

In SD, participants were picked from three areas that is Mlango-Kubwa, Eastleigh and Majengo. We looked at the issue of insecurity and its root causes, and possible solutions within our communities. These discussions

enabled me to identify the gaps in my community. Several youth were joining crime at a tender age and dropping out of school. As a response to these issues, I started a group called “Young and Creative” that focuses on youth mentorship for school-going youth, through the creation of safe spaces. These were mainly the school going youth from Mlango-Kubwa and the aim was to keep them focused on their future prospects. The mentorship takes place during the holidays and includes various activities like nature walks, bonding games, talks and silent time to share and discuss ways of dealing with the different challenges that they face. Currently, the group mentors 50 young people.

In addition, I noticed that my community was divided along ethnic lines and so I initiated the formation of Kiamutisya Welfare Association, whose aim is to unite members from different ethnic communities to address issues affecting the community and support each other during times of difficulty, like when someone dies. The welfare group has 290 registered members and we



meet twice a month, where each member contributes a hundred shillings. SD has increased my confidence to address issues affecting people in my community. It has also made me realise that if people meet and discuss issues together, they can resolve the problems that they face.

I have gained courage as a result of SD. Before I joined SD, I was shy and could not address a crowd; I would sit in sessions and take notes quietly but by the second year, I facilitated sessions of up to 14 participants.

My family and community members can bear witness to this and have nicknamed me “The chairlady”. Now that the project has come to an end, I want to put into practice what I learnt, be an ambassador of peace in my community and an icon to the youth to encourage them to embrace self-employment, and not rely on white-collar jobs or engage in crime to make it in life. Thank you.”

From being timid to becoming a leader and sought-after Master of Ceremony

Kennedy Kimeu, a 27-year-old from Majengo, Nairobi narrates his journey of transformation from a shy, timid youth to a confident and outspoken young man.

“I come from a family of three – two boys and one girl. Our dad passed away in 2003, and our mother was left to fend for us. As a child I got burnt in a fire accident which left my face with permanent scars that made other children discriminate against me. They made fun of me and as a result, I became an introvert. I always tried to cover my face by wearing a turban or a cap until I reached form four. I hated myself and disliked the way people looked at me. I used to isolate myself from others and would at times feel so depressed.

I got to know LPI when they were doing research in Majengo in 2015 and I was involved in a focus group discussion. I sat at the back and did not talk much. I was very quiet because it was my first time to interact on community matters and I had just completed secondary school. In 2016, I was again invited to join the first ever community SD sessions being implemented jointly by Eastleighwood and LPI. It was a good platform that enabled me to engage with youth from other areas, that is Eastleigh, Majengo, and Mlango Kubwa. I learnt a lot as we exchanged ideas in the sessions. We shared, analysed our problems and designed peace actions.

I was happy when I was given an opportunity to be a moderator in 2017. By this time, I had begun building

my confidence and the training sessions helped me start opening up and learn communication skills. I realised that other young people had their own struggles. This ignited my interest to work with the community on issues affecting them.

In the first year as a moderator, I was still working on my confidence and let my co-moderator take up most of the roles but later in August, we had a peace action and I was given the responsibility to be the Master of Ceremony (MC), leading in broadcasting peace messages during the street theatre and walk. This made many people realise I had a talent.

I remember one man from Majengo went to tell my mother that she had an amazingly talented young man as a son. The following year during SD kickoff, I was made the MC and have been taking this role in most of the project activities. I was able to stand in front of people and through that I discovered that I have skills in public speaking. I pursued this further by watching other MC’s on YouTube, their skills, and techniques and I started making grand strides in MCing. Since then I have been able to MC several community activities including a wedding, church event, breakfast meeting, roadshow and the launch of a community project. This would not have been possible without LPI giving me a platform to discover and express my gift in public speaking.

As a moderator, I learnt to bond with my co-moderator and participants, and we created a strong relationship. We were able to visit each other, make calls, celebrate parties like birthdays, baby showers and get togethers. One notable activity is when we organised with our SD group to go to Mombasa and spend three days together as a team. This made me discover that I had leadership skills and the ability to mobilise people. As a result, many other opportunities have opened up such as an internship with LPI for six months. This exposed me to professionalism in running programmes, financial management, respecting communication channels in an office setup.

I had an opportunity to travel to Sweden for a peace forum. This allowed me to interact with youth from Europe and understand the different contextual dynamics that youth face. I have also been able to train under Fryshuset, a Swedish organisation, as an African youth peace leader. I am a certified trainer of trainers in peacebuilding. I have participated in international forums such as Oslo Summit on Peace, Security and Environment organised by UN-Habitat, and through that I have been an advocate for peace and the environment.

Currently, I have good working relationship with the police, the local administration, Nyumba Kumi [community policing], and local community organisations. I work with children and mentor the youth in schools in my community. I am engaged in community activities such as solving conflicts. I know the procedures when sorting out issues in my community and observe boundaries. Previously, it was hard for me to understand the Muslim community and particularly the Somali community but today, I have friends from these groups because I have put aside the stereotypes and prejudices that had been engrained in me. My change can be attested to by my mum, who is now very proud of the person I have become and what I do. I am proud of the person I have become. I can now take selfies and I have self-love to appreciate the Ken that I am now! This has been a journey towards self-discovery. I’ve seen myself get a platform in local television stations and radio stations to advocate for positive societal changes; I never imagined this could happen.

Now that the project has come to an end, I am focusing my energy on growing the NAWENZA254 community-based organisation which I established with a team of nine SD moderators in 2019 to mentor young people as a way of building their capacities in life skills and nurturing their talents.”

My mother often says, “this is not the Ken that I knew.”



Chapter Four: Professional Growth

SD ignited my passion for peace studies



Steve has been mentoring young people in sports and in 2017, LPI identified him as one of the peacebuilding leaders in his community. He was then able to see the link between sports and peacebuilding and this motivated him to gain more knowledge in peacebuilding. He opted to pursue a Masters degree in peacebuilding and was fortunate to obtain a scholarship to join Hekima Institute of Peace and International Studies.

“I will always cherish Sustained Dialogue”, says Stephen, a 34-year-old from Korogocho. I come from a family of eight. I came to know about LPI through a friend, Mwana Mgeni who was conducting a peace initiative programme in Majengo with LPI. LPI wanted to engage youth who are active in the community and I was selected because I have been a community mobiliser and leader in a community-based organisation called Simama Kwa Mti [Stand next to a Tree]. This is a community-based organisation that mentors young people through sports for peace and development. At the time I was not formally employed and had just completed my undergraduate degree in journalism and mass communication and had intentions to pursue a master’s degree.

In 2019, I was an SD moderator in Korogocho. This enabled me to support young people to use their talents to spread peace in the community. Through SD, we have gained skills to become peace ambassadors and gained knowledge on how we can tackle conflict in a peaceful way. As we shared experiences in sessions, the young people really moved me to think of how to engage young people to be at the forefront of transforming their communities and more so, my community.

As I shared my experience with other young people, I developed an interest in the field of peace and with the recommendation letter from LPI, I was awarded a full scholarship by ‘Konrad Adenauer Stiftung’, a German

political foundation working on civic engagement. I am currently a student at Hekima College doing Peace Studies and International Relations. LPI also gave me a laptop that has been helpful in writing my papers and undertaking research. In the community, I have dedicated my time to volunteering in peace initiatives organised by LPI. I have identified gaps that will form the basis of my research. I will be forever grateful to the LPI team for their initiative to transform lives of young people by bringing them together in a common platform, safe enough to share their challenges and come up innovative solutions.”

A teacher reborn through SD

Beryl, 27 years old from Eastleigh, a secondary school teacher, a community mobiliser, a member of Den of Hope youth group and a Sustained Dialogue moderator, takes us through her journey. Her participation in SD gave her a new approach to her career.

“The SD process has been a learning venture for me. This engagement has helped me improve my teaching skills as a secondary school teacher. Now that I am back to teaching, my lessons are quite different and interesting for the students. In my lessons, I use creative and artistic styles to keep my students engaged, like through colouring or asking them to give me their thoughts and views through drawing or symbols. I obtained these skills during the moderator’s trainings and engagements. I have realised that presentations and learning do not have to be boring as the moderators training sessions were always fun, interactive, with a lot of creativity in presentations and development of materials used for reflection sessions that allowed us to internalise learning. I am now able to apply the techniques in my teaching skills and also in my day-to-day life as a teacher. I got to know about this project implemented by LPI through the Den of Hope youth group in Eastleigh and I was recommended by our chairperson to be interviewed. I was selected to be a moderator to lead a group of 12 participants. As a moderator, I used different creative techniques that I learnt and this made my group members more open and helped build trust amongst themselves. We have created a strong bond of friendship and we still communicate through the WhatsApp group we formed during the SD process. Through SD, I have learnt about teamwork and being proactive in my community. The LPI team believed in us and recognised our individual capacities. They took us in with our inexperience and moulded us to become better leaders than we were before. I got an opportunity to do an internship with LPI as a graduate assistant for six months. During this period, I learnt about how to work in a team and offer support to other departments in the organisation.

One of the things I learnt was to prepare training materials, to conduct training sessions and to speak in public to diverse audiences. The programme has sharpened my leadership skills, gave me more peacebuilding experience, and also how to handle office duties, accounting for funds and working with diverse groups. It made me realise we are leaders in our different capacities.

As a moderator, I got an opportunity to interact with SD moderators from Ethiopia and Sudan during a learning exchange meeting in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. The participants in the meeting shared their SD experiences from their different contexts and this was a learning point for me. Many people can attest to the changes brought about by the project. The Den of Hope chairman recognises



The Den of Hope chairman says, “wale wasee wa SD macohorts wa tafuteni njia ya kumake hii meeting interesting na isikuwe tu introduction ya kawaida”.- “the people who are SD cohorts, get a way of making the meeting interesting so that it does not take the ordinary kind of introduction”

the different abilities and skills gained by being part of the SD process. Nowadays, the introduction in group meetings is usually an SD affair. He is aware that there are things we handle and do differently. In the community, we are many who have been in SD and the community identifies us with SD. If someone doesn’t know your name, they relate with you through SD like “huyu si ni yule wa SD”- ‘this is the person from SD’. We are also still linked up together after being in the process and keep thinking of solutions to issues in our community.

I am confident that going forward there is a lot that we shall achieve in our community from what we gained from the project.”

SD enabled me to access a scholarship to pursue my studies

As Veronica joined SD, she did not know her career journey was about to begin courtesy of the opportunity that presented itself on her first day during the SD kick-off event at KCITI.

“My name is Veronica and I am 20 years old. I come from Majengo. I am the first born in a family of four. My parents do not have stable jobs and could not afford to take me to the college as they struggled looking for bursaries to take me through secondary school. The teacher training scholarship came in handy to help me fulfil my dream of becoming a teacher. It is through a project on Sustained Dialogue, that I got the opportunity to pursue my college education at Kenya Christian Industrial Training Institute (KCITI) where I am studying Early Childhood Education through a scholarship which I obtained after learning about the opportunity during the Sustained Dialogue kick-off event.

The administrator from KCITI announced about the scholarship and I applied for it, I was shortlisted for an interview which I did and passed and thus I gained admission for this course. I am enjoying the course which will be completed in April 2020 and I am so grateful to the institution for offering me this opportunity. The scholarship has enabled me to study without being worried of where to get my college fees. I am aspiring to get a job and advance my career in Early Childhood Education.

I joined Sustained Dialogue through inspiration from a friend who told me about an organisation that is dealing with peace and were recruiting youth to join the 2019 programme. I was excited about the new venture and so



I decided to join the programme. I find the SD sessions to be exciting and motivating and it has helped me interact with others and make many friends. This has helped build my self-esteem and gain new knowledge on different issues affecting youth and ways of addressing them. The activities done in the process are fun and especially the Arboretum SD close-out activity was engaging and enhanced the bond between participants. I am a different person now with a positive outlook of life. My life has been transformed and now I can be a role model to other young people in my community in Majengo. I want them to know they can make it in life if only they can take advantage of the opportunities around us.”

Chapter Five: Young people overcoming economic exclusion

It's a New Dawn – Starting a female owned business



Zamzam, an SD participant, loves all things beautiful and her dream was to start a salon business in Mandera town. However, her financial situation meant that it remained only a dream. It is not until when she joined SD as a participant that things changed.

“After joining SD, there were a number of topics that we discussed in my group. There was this day when there was a presentation on the Kenya Youth Empowerment Opportunities Project (KYEOP) during an SD capacity strengthening session. I was so excited to learn that such opportunities were available and therefore, I enrolled for the entrepreneurship training. The programme paid for my training in hairdressing and beauty therapy and gave me a stipend of Kes. 6,000 each month for a period of six months. I saved that money and I also opted to walk and save some of my transport allowance from the SD project, which I used to purchase the things I needed to start a salon.

I have since encouraged seven other girls in my SD group to join me and form a youth group that would enable us to apply for funds from organisations, like BORESHA

which gives grants to youth aged 18 to 35 years to start small businesses.

I am now an influencer in my community, and I have encouraged seven girls from my village to apply for KYEOP opportunities. It makes me happy to see me and my friends progressing in life.”

Zamzam's work has been recognised. Her dream does not stop here, as Zamzam plans to open salons in Banisa and Rhamu in Mandera County.

Power borne out of poverty

Mistaha, an SD participant, narrates her life story with tears of gratitude as she remembers growing up in poverty. She says that SD has positively impacted her life. She talks of the power of information.

During an SD capacity training session, she learned about the Kenya Youth Employment Opportunity Program (KYEOP), an initiative of the World Bank. Mistaha applied and got a grant of 6,000 Kenyan shillings (KES) per month for a period of six months. She saved up the money totalling KES 30,000 and opened a clothes-selling business in June 2019.

Through this business she has been able to uplift the livelihood of her entire family. Upon getting employment at a cybercafe, and thereafter at a driving school as a secretary, she handed over the clothes-making and selling business to her father to manage. Mistaha is glad that her life has been transformed for the better – it is a



far cry from her schooling days when her first hijab, dress and pair of trousers which formed part of the school uniform were all donations from friends as her father could not afford her school fees.

Mistaha proudly shares that the proceeds from the business have more than doubled and the school fees for her five siblings aged between 19 and 7 years is now comfortably being paid. Neighbours, she says, comment on how her family’s life has improved. “Honestly, SD has opened my eyes. If you are wise you will reap its benefits.”

“haki SD imenifungua macho! Kama uko na akili na unafikiri kabisa, unafaidika.”

CONCLUSION

Stories are a powerful connector amongst human beings. They enable people to join the dots, to empathise, to relate and most importantly to take action. They demonstrate that indeed change is possible within communities and societies. They are a powerful tool in showing the impact of a peacebuilding process. For LPI, these stories are also a way of foregrounding the humanity of peacebuilding work. It also serves as re-affirmation that if the methodology used leads to positive results, it can be adopted for future peacebuilding engagement with young people. It is our hope that these stories will showcase youth agency and inspire readers towards supporting youth-led peace and security efforts on the African continent. LPI hopes that young people reading these stories will be motivated to document their own stories and experiences of positive change.

Annex: Photos on SD Process

Youth as Agents of Change: AHA! Moments



Accompanying and induction of partners



Training for moderators

2018/2019



Orientation to SD



Kickoff Events

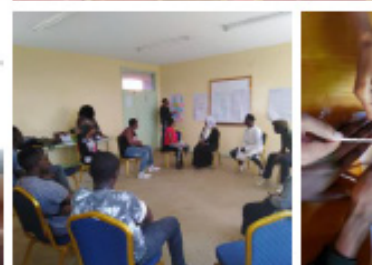


Sustained Dialogue sessions

SD Interactions



Peer to Peer Engagement





Reflection meetings





Youth learning and sharing day





National Advocacy meeting



Engagement during the multi-stakeholder analysis



NYS Campaign

Youth advocating for the return of NYS community cohorts in Nairobi



Security actors networking forum



Peace actions



International Day of Peace



Peace actions between youth and security actors



Peace Actions: Strengthening Relationships between Youth and Security Actors



External Linkages during conferences in Nairobi



Youth learning and Exchange in Ethiopia



Light moments within the project cycle

SD Youth meaningfully engaged in nation building



Kennedy, SD moderator and founder of Naweza CBO taking lead at various events



Juma Mwangi SD moderator sharing experiences in Vienna - Austria



Hafsa SD moderator sharing in international platforms



Zelpha an SD moderator engaging in peace process in Nigeria

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LPI has been operational in Kenya since 1986, initially as a regional hub for activities across the Horn of Africa. Recognising compounding challenges that produce violence, LPI developed partnerships with both established and emerging informal civil society to promote new spaces for dialogue, joint action and constructive engagement with government actors. The current focus is on North-Eastern Kenya and Nairobi's informal settlements.

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