

## Defusing Ethnic Tensions in Kuria

Kenya

University of California, San Diego

Enzo Haussecker and Sarah Sypris, United States of America, UCSD

### **Section I:**

A. In course of executing this project for peace we were aiming to affect a positive evolution in the mentalities and outlooks of the participants towards accepting and respecting previously-combated members of opposing tribes. We desired to accomplish such a feat by instilling ideas of peace and progress into the hearts and minds of the Kurian youth throughout the curriculum of intensive workshop sessions and further cementing this cohesive existence by selecting two additional students, one from each respective tribe and of each gender, to receive scholarships to attend secondary school together.

B. We, most unfortunately, did not supplement this generous scholarship with further funds. However, it is important to note that we had intended on doing so, however, due to a multitude of logistical impediments, we were effectively prevented from doing so. May we note that it would have been highly beneficial to have secured additional funding from other various sources.

C. This project consisted of a concentrated six-day workshop based on the foundation of promoting notions of peace and understanding between the youth leaders of opposing tribes through use of various topics for each day and then proceeding to select two of the most exceptional students from each respective tribe to receive scholarships to fund the entirety of their secondary school education together in order to continue on this trajectory to peace and unity.

It gives us great pleasure to report that due to highly-detailed planning prior to actual project execution, the designated activities occurred directly in accordance with our intended goals. In reference to unanticipated difficulties, we are grateful that there are few to report. The foremost difficulty consisted of budget constraint. As aforementioned, it would have proved highly useful to have successfully supplemented our funds by means of additional fundraising activities. However, this proved to be a minor issue which resulted from lack of anticipation of the personal costs of undertaking this endeavor (such as the cost of health vaccinations, for example). Due to ample research prior to arriving in country, we do not believe that we encountered significant linguistic nor cultural challenges between ourselves and the beneficiaries of this project. We will, however, assert the cultural mentality in terms of lax organizational structure and time management often was cause for repeated and last-minute flexibility and revision of schedules on our part, however, all goals were still appropriately accomplished, if not exceeded. Again, the most critical items that contributed to the smooth implementation of the many components of this dynamic project were organization and research. Having detailed all foreseeable items significantly before-hand and conducting in-depth and critical research studies provided us with a pathway to ensure that we were completely prepared for challenges that may have served to impede us if not anticipated. As a specific example, we had additionally conducted in-depth research on the participants in the workshop, which allowed us to tailor our lecture material to their level of comprehension and cater the discussion topics to meet their specific needs while probing their minds towards broader expansion. Finally, in terms of the selection process for the two secondary school scholarship recipients, we held all potential students to the highly specific, identical criteria and interview processes, including several, staggered visits to their respective schools and homes with complete comprehensive interviews and analyses. In doing so, we felt that this afforded a fair and balanced opportunity for all students to compete equally and allowed us the most honest and deep approach to selecting the best candidates.

We did, however, hit some additional minor road bumps along this path that were unpredictable and unavoidable. These were rooted in the school system in Kenya and the physical geography of Kuria. First, as not all schools operate on the same schedule, certain districts released students for holiday later than others and/or ended their break and retracted their student body earlier. As a result, we had three students miss the very first day of the workshop and one leave right before the goodbye dinner (although she did attend the entirety of the workshop lectures). Second, it was often challenging to locate the potential scholarship recipients' homes, as there are no addresses in this region for private dwelling residences, thus, it was not uncommon for the successful location of a particular family and their homestead to take several days. However, as we anticipated this reality, we allotted an acceptable reserve of days to accommodate such adventures and were grateful to

have been able to become so intimately acquainted with all seven of the students from the candidate pool to ensure that the cycle of peace would be continued.

The number of direct and immediate beneficiaries from this project totals at the seventeen, referring to the top students from each district in Kuria attending the workshop, as well as the two scholarship awardees. However, the full spectrum of recipients of the benefits from this endeavor successfully reaches far beyond this unique and select group to include the entire Kurian community, present and future, as well as, by extension, Kenya and East Africa as a whole. By effectively creating a cosm of peace in a previously violatate region, we are allowing for prosperity and a positive future to replace war and suffering. By starting the chain of eradication and improvement, we are confident that the benefits of this alternate reality will continue to affect neighboring communities and enhance the lives of people in this region on a whole-scale level. Given that the two scholars selected as well as all workshop recipients are committed to remaining in the region in order to use their skills to promote peace, understanding, and growth, we have no doubt that the numerous impacts of this project will create such a radical change that the future of this area is destined to being converted into an incubator for continued motivation, improvement, and peace leadership. Section II:

## **Section II:**

A. We define peace beyond a state of nonviolence and extend it to referring to a state of healthy intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships; whereby individuals are afforded with equal, realistic avenues to attaining educational and economic stability and growth; social, gender, religious, and ethnic opulence and equality; and a stable, honest governing system that operates in the interest of the citizens. Specifically to this project, peace is the unmitigated absence of inter-tribal conflict as a result of educational awareness. This project is rooted in a foundation of peace and is saturated in this regard on both the micro and marco levels. In immediacy, it creates an environment of peace through mutual education, curiosity, and goodwill among the participants of the workshop. In the long term, this will be reinforced, maintained, expanded by means of a two-tiered system. The first level is that we targeted the youth, thereby sculpting young adult minds and ending the generational cycle of hate and prejudice. The second level consists of the exact identities of these youth. These individuals are the most prominent and academically successful in each of their respective districts and tribes. By modifying the mindsets of the children and future leaders of today, we are modifying the mentalities of the entirety of the citizens of tomorrow. This comprehensive and multi-targeted approach ensures that we are effectively educating and enhancing all levels of the social stratum to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to progress and grow together in unity and harmony.

As clichéd as it may initially sound, this project as eternally changed our lives and our commitment to international peace and prosperity. Considering the level of intimacy and friendship afforded by spending this time in Kenya and the inherent long-term nature of executing the remaining components, there is no shade of doubt that we shall return with the intention of influencing further commitments to peace and achievement among all members of the Kurian people, regardless of tribe. We strive for a day when peace is defined as the absolute absence of tribalism and will continue to dedicate ourselves to this objective until this dream is made a reality. We also now have been influenced by this project to view the world with more understanding and inquisitive eyes in that we are humbled by the great, all-encompassing unity afforded to us all as a result of our shared humanity and understand the power of even one individual to revolutionize the world. We are fortunate to have learned how to connect with anyone through even the thickest cultural and ideological barriers and plan to continue cultivating and refining such skills for future projects for peace. Finally, we are deeply grateful to have been able to partake on this adventure and hope that we have changed the world as much as it has changed us.

B. "This experience has been unequivocally the most exciting adventure of my life, and I hope to continue my efforts for peace and reconciliation in the future". Enzo Haussecker "This adventure has forever sculpted my understanding of how I define peace. Participating in this Davis Projects for Peace Summer 2011 endeavor has illuminated the reality that peace is not just something that you wish for, rather it is something that you create and strive for- and, with the right type of effort, the scope and depth of the fruits of this labor are phenomenal." Sarah Sypris

