

STUDENTS FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY – UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

*SfGS-UoN*

# UNITED YOUTH FOR PEACE PROJECT REPORT

PROJECT DATES: 24<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2009 – 18<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2009

VENUE: LANGAS, ELDORET TOWN, KENYA

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Eldoret is one of the towns in Kenya that was hardest hit by the post election violence that erupted after the 2007 General Elections. Eldoret recorded the largest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with property worth hundreds of millions of Kenya shillings being destroyed, including residential structures.

Although every one involved in the violence suffered in one way or the other, the worst affected were women and children. Many of these watched their husbands and fathers hacked to death and the trauma that resulted was unbearable. In many families in Kenya, fathers are traditionally the bread winners while women are majorly home makers. This however had to change as many women either lost their husbands during the violence or had

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<sup>1</sup> Students for Global Sustainability – University of Nairobi (SfGS-UoN) is a member of the World Student Community for Sustainable Development (WSC-SD)

them incapacitated as a result of the fights. The mothers were therefore forced to assume the unfamiliar role of providing for their families. This was made even difficult by the fact that these families were displaced with most of them still living in camps. The children, having been displaced from their schools had to settle for makeshift schools in the camps where fellow displaced people volunteered to teach them. Most of the volunteers were not qualified teachers but their contribution was very important, especially for the children who were preparing for the national examinations later in the year. With few volunteers and overwhelming number of students, the volunteer teachers concentrated on the candidates leaving the other students with very little or no attention at all.

Although the government has made a lot of efforts to resettle the internally displaced persons, very little has been achieved in terms of restoring normalcy in the lives of these people. The money that was assigned for the resettlement exercise was too little and many displaced persons used it all in less than two weeks, without even putting up their houses. The exercise was also marred with several irregularities and up to now, a large number of displaced persons are still living in tents at the Eldoret Show Ground.

Above all these problems, there has been a lot of suspicion between neighbors for those who managed to go back to their former areas of residence. With the bitterness of losing loved ones and having to live with those who participated in the loss of their family members and the destruction of their properties, the tension is great.

It was in this background that the Students for Global Sustainability – University of Nairobi partnered with two College of Notre Dame, Maryland students to undertake a “United Youth for Peace Project in Eldoret”.

The project aspired to involve a diverse group of young Kenyans in the process of national reconciliation through voluntary service in terms of workshops that foster sustainable community development. As a result, the participants of *the United Youth for Peace* contributed to peace building by gathering ethnically diverse members of the struggling Langas community of Eldoret for the common cause of personal development, such as practical adult workshops on health awareness, sustainable development and national reconciliation, entrepreneurial guidance to an organized group of women, and daily Mathematics, English and Social Science classes to children who have no access to education.

## 1.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The project was initiated by two students from the College of Notre Dame, Maryland; Liza Kalishnikova and Maria Angelica and SfGS-UoN president; Mr. Nickson Otieno. The three students decided to work together to develop a project to help the Kenyan community in Eldoret to recover from the effects of the Inter-ethnic Violence that erupted after the disputed 2007 presidential elections.

Mr. Otieno engaged the members of SfGS-UoN in developing the scope of the project, defining the specific objectives, activities and methods of achieving the targets since they clearly understood the existing gaps in their local communities. The two US students assisted with raising funds to support the project. They successfully applied for grant from the Davis Projects for Peace, which enabled them to cover their travel costs to Kenya and fund great part of the project overall cost. SfGS-UoN worked together with the two students to invite other groups in Eldoret to participate in the project (in the ways highlighted in the subsequent sections of the report).

The costs covered by the Davis Project for Peace grant include:

- accommodation for the project team (SfGS-UoN members and the US students) in Eldoret during the project period.
- the cost of materials donated (solar cook kits, first aid kit, blankets and mosquito nets)
- production of certificates
- part of the costs for the children's feeding program

SfGS-UoN's material contribution was covered in the following ways:

- Contacted the local companies for donations in kind. Through this we were able to:
  - secure maize flour used for the feeding program from Pembe Millers
  - secure tree seedlings planted
  - collect books and other publications that were used to set up the community library
- Contacted Solar cookers international and agreed with them to offer the training and demonstrations free of charge and also grant discounts on the solar cook kits bought and donated.
- Participants from SfGS-UoN met their own transport costs from Nairobi to Eldoret (about 400 km apart)

- Members made personal contributions to buy for some of the children school uniforms and books to send them to the nearby public primary schools so as to continue learning.

## 2.0 PROJECT COMPONENTS

The project had five components as follows:

- 2.1. Peace and reconciliation
- 2.2. Environmental awareness
- 2.3 Health and sanitation
- 2.4. Education and mentorship
- 2.5. Women and Youth empowerment

### 2.1.0. PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The objective of this component was to help in eliminating the suspicion that has been there between the neighbors, i.e. the victims of the violence and the alleged perpetrators. We organized peace forums in which the participants were able to freely interact with each other creating a free atmosphere and dissolving the tension that has all along existed. This was achieved in the following ways:

- Two workshops** were held at the Door Church in Langas estate and were attended by close to two hundred participants. Apart from providing interactive sessions for the participants, invited speakers together with the peace project team stressed the importance of peaceful coexistence as well as the need to forgive each other and embrace their neighbors. The members of the Peace Project team demonstrated the benefits of cross culture interactions as evident in their efforts to utilize the diversity to organize a successful project. An exhibition of children's impressions (through drawings) of a peaceful world was organized.
- Sports Competition:** Apart from the workshops, SfGS-UoN employed sports to further drive home the message of peace and reconciliation to the residents of Langas. Two days were set aside for this and a total of twelve youth football teams and two women football teams were formed and participated. The games were held at the Cherunya Sports Grounds located in Langas. During these competitions people from the perceived rival communities played together, interacting freely with each other and having great fun. Although the project team did not have big prizes to give to the winners, it gave balls to each team and shared snacks together. At the end of the day, as much as the winners were

given adequate recognition, everybody was a winner and people went home asking for more of such activities. These teams still exist and we hope to see them continue playing as a means of forging peaceful co-existence.

- iii) **A youth Peace forum/Kenya Dream Festival:** The last of the peace workshops was held in Eldoret town, at the TACC hall and close to 400 participants attended. Here the approach was a little different as the peace message was passed through a combination of talent shows (poems, skits songs and dances). With the theme as peace and reconciliation, forty five youth groups came together with both group and individual performances. This workshop was done in partnership with “Teen 2012”; a youth group based in Eldoret and whose members worked really hard for the success of this workshop. Presentations by local officials<sup>2</sup> and peace enthusiasts<sup>3</sup> resulted in a successful effort to empower local youth. At the end of the forum, a list of sixty-six additional volunteers was collected.

## 2.2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

The following activities were accomplished:

- i) **Two environmental education workshops:** Two environmental awareness campaigns were held at the Door Church, with participants drawn from the expansive Langas Slum and its environs. Here again, there were open discussions on environmental conservation. With the assistance of SfGS-UoN facilitators, the participants identified the human activities that are harmful to the environment and their effects hence the need for environmental conservation. The areas covered included proper disposal of waste, recycling of non biodegradable materials like plastic bags, water and energy conservation, forestation and re-a forestation, etc.
- ii) **Integrated Cooking Energy Options:** the participants were educated on the benefits of renewable sources of energy, like the solar energy. SfGS-UoN invited experts from the Solar Cookers International, a non governmental organization based in Kenya that develops and promotes the dissemination of various types of solar cooking technology. The experts educated the participants on the benefits of this new technology, its role in environmental conservation, and also went a head to demonstrate how various solar cookits and energy saving baskets are used. This culminated into yet another sharing of meals as each participant had a bite of the delicacies that had been cooked using solar as the workshop progressed.

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<sup>2</sup> The Mayor of Eldoret, Manager of International Organization of Migration, area chiefs, and Eldoret constituency managers, to mention a few

<sup>3</sup> The Director of RISDEV, Secretary of the Eldoret Branch YMCA, Manager of USAID, members of Eldoret business fraternity, and Chief Executive Officer of Youth Consortium among others.

At the end of demonstrations and training, the project team purchased ten kits from the solar cookers international to help establish a community kitchen at The Door Church and also donated four kits to the “Amani Kasarani Women Group”, whose formation was facilitated by SfGS-UoN.

- iii) **Tree planting:** With the assistance of the area leaders including the Door Church’s pastor and the Officer Commanding Langas Police Station, over 500 seedlings were planted in public places like the Door Church compound, the Langas Health Center and within the compound of Langas Police Station. Plans to plant more trees in Langas Primary School were however postponed due to lack of seedlings and the members agreed to make arrangements in good time and have about 1000 seedlings planted in Langas Primary and its surroundings.

### **2.3.0 COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

Two workshops were organized for community health awareness and were facilitated by SfGS-UoN members from the Collage of Health Sciences, University of Nairobi. The participants were educated on issues of public health and sanitation, including safe handling of water and foodstuff, prevention of common waterborne diseases like typhoid, cholera and dysentery, procedures for basic life support and first aid for various conditions. The project team also donated 150 mosquito nets and blankets to the children who participated in the workshops.

Also covered was HIV/AIDS awareness and some topics on home based care for the terminally ill. During the workshops it was noticed that the spread of HIV/AIDS had gone up in the area following the post election violence as young girls who had no means of survival after their families lost everything were forced to engage in prostitution to fend for their families. Through the workshops, it became evident that Langas community suffered a lot from jiggers’ infestation which also affect children’s education at school.

### **2.4.0 WOMEN AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

In the beginning of the project, a group of impoverished women of the Lang’as community (Kasarani neighborhood) – the epicenter of the post-election violence – was initially gathered for community health and environmental awareness workshops. However, the facilitators of the workshops were instead forced to change the nature of the meeting to address women’s’ complains and offer possible solutions. This group was originally a vivid example of tribalism – violent quarreling erupted in the discussions and later on when the women tried to elect multi-ethnic leadership for their group which undermined future cooperation and tended towards an internal split. However, through the project team’s coordination, the women were able to reconcile and reintegrate, create an organized and registered group, elect official representatives and set a plan of action towards economic prosperity through establishment of a communal chicken farm.

Women and youth empowerment is the key to sustainable peace and a sure way of helping to keep the young children in school. The evidence from the violence that took place in Eldoret and many other parts of Kenya shows that majority of those who caused the violence and destroyed other people's properties were the poor people in the society. Apart from being very vulnerable to manipulation by politicians and other rich people to serve their selfish interest, some of the people who find it very hard to put food on their tables harbor bitter feelings against their rich neighbors whom they feel have more than they need while the poor people are starving.

It is with this understanding that the project team sought to help Langas women to come together and form an organised and operational women groups, through which they can share ideas and with assistance where necessary engage in some income generating projects to improve their living standards. So far the project team managed to facilitate the formation of one women group –the “Amani Kasarani Women Group” which by the end of the project was going to register and deliberate on the poultry project. The team also brought experts from solar cookers international who educated the women on the use of solar energy, and at the end of the workshop, four cook kits were bought and donated to the group for use and demonstration at the community kitchen.

So far, this is the only group that the project team actively got involved with. However a few existing groups invited the team for talks and advise which were not possible until the next visit. The team also plans to assist a few more groups including youth groups to get organized and run projects that can better their lives.

## **2.5.0 EDUCATION AND MENTORSHIP**

As a result of the post election chaos and the displacement of people that resulted, many students ended up relocating in areas far away from the schools they were attending and consequently dropping out of school. After the camps were closed down, the makeshift schools also disappeared and there was a very large population of children of school going age that were not in school. Apart from those who had dropped from school, we found a big number of children as old as 15 years of age, who had never gone to school at all and did not know even how to write their names.

Originally, the project intended to provide educational services and food assistance to a maximum of eighty children who do not attend school and are direct and indirect victims of the post-election violence. However, faced with the reality and needs of the community, the services were extended to one hundred and seventy children and opened a second location to accommodate the students. As the age range of the students was vast – from 5 to 18 years old, we separated them into four groups according to their age and level of knowledge. Each group was assigned a volunteer instructor (students from the College of Notre Dame and the University and Nairobi) that taught several disciplines and provided mentorship throughout the project. Each

day of school, children had nutritious breakfast and lunch that aided their concentration in class. A parents' meeting (which only mothers chose to attend) was called at the end of the project to discuss the issues that prevent their children from going to school and to highlight the importance of education for their children's' future. Although primary education in Kenya is free, many families cannot afford administrative, examination and desk fees and uniform and school supplies expenses. In addition, older children are kept out of school to help with the house chores and their siblings' care. Other children of school age do not attend academic institutions because of hunger (meals are not provided at school) and their guardians' blunt disregard for the value of education.

### 2.5.1 Structure of the Education Program

Two makeshift schools were set up, one at the Door church and the other at the home of a volunteer, Mr. Mutua, where basic writing and reading skills as well as algebra and basic math were taught. The students were grouped into four classes as follows:

- **Beginners A** – these were children who were above school going age and had never been to school at all. It formed the largest group, having 53 pupils and the most challenging to handle as some bigger children were ashamed of having to sit with much younger ones.
- **Beginners B** – had pupils who had not been to primary school but had at least attended some pre-school training.
- **Lower primary** – this had pupils who had dropped out of school between class one and class three
- **Upper primary** – this group consisted of pupils who dropped out of school between classes/grades four and eight.

The classes were conducted from 8.00am to 5.00 pm, and the students provided with lunch and breakfast. In total 176 pupils were taken care of. However, the demand was far much greater than this and many students had to be locked out. This was due to the limited resources in terms of space, teachers, teaching materials and even lack of enough food materials to sustain the school feeding program

### 2.5.2 The objectives of this program were as follows:

- i. To impart basic literary skills like reading writing and basic math to children who had passed the school going age but were for one reason or the other, not going to school, and probably would have failed to go to school at all

- ii. To arouse the interest of both the parents and the students who had dropped out of school to go back to school and to assist them catch up with what they had missed during their absence from school
- iii. To identify needy children who have both the willingness and the ability to study but for one reason or the other, cannot keep themselves in school. Relevant intervention would then be put in place to assist such children to stay in school in order to realize their dreams.
- iv. To guide and mentor the students through out their lives of studentship; the members of SfGS-UoN resolved that each person would identify at least one student whom he or she would mentor and assist to continue with his or her education possible up to university level.

### 2.5.3 Outcome of the education program

At the end of the peace project, the outcome was as follows:

- All the children under this program who initially did not know how to read and write were able to at least write their names, recite the English alphabet and also count in both English and Swahili. Some could not do much more than this.
- Although the first few days were very difficult, with some pupils struggling to keep their concentration after long absence from school, the students caught up, loved the program and felt like they were in school. At the end almost everyone vowed to go back to school in spite of the challenges they faced.
- The team identified many bright students and the challenges that kept them out of school and took appropriate actions that were within the means of the team. These included visiting the three public schools in the area and making arrangements with the head teachers on the re-admission of these students.
- The volunteers found out that apart from the small levies that kept the many students out of school, quite a big number were out because they did not have the school uniforms. Others however, stayed home because there was no food at home and felt they could not concentrate in class without having regular meals.
- The members of the team also identified students that they would mentor and assist with all matters pertaining to their schooling that are within their means. Although it was not possible then to attach every pupil to a mentor, it is hoped that with regular visits, the SfGS-UoN

members who did not go to Eldoret as well as other volunteers would be introduced to the children and more of them would be absorbed in this program.

- The pupils were awarded certificates which would help them prove that they have participated in an educational program so as to gain access to the formal education system. Through the certificates, the project team is also able to track the beneficiaries for follow up.

#### **2.5.4 Short-term Plan of Action**

The team has planned a follow up visit during which the following are to be accomplished:

- I. Meet the students and take them to the public schools we already talked to and agreed on the same
- II. To assist the students who do not have school uniforms and the small levies required in the schools by purchasing the uniform and paying the levies directly to the schools to as many students as will be within our ability.
- III. To establish a link with the head teachers through which volunteers will be able to monitor the progress of the pupils, getting information on their needs and responding appropriately.
- IV. To assess the situation in the homes of the very needy students and where necessary purchase blankets and mosquito nets for them (this was done before but it only benefited a few pupils due to shortage of funds)
- V. Visit the women group to see how far they have gone with their poultry project that we facilitated them to initiate and assist in whatever way possible to ensure their project runs successfully.

#### **2.5.5 Future plans**

In addition to the campaign to have every child of school going aged enrolled and attending school, SfGS-UoN is intends to establish a system where members can run makeshift school each year during their vocation. This was agreed after the realization that some children who, either had not been to school at all or had spent a very long time out of school felt they were too old to share classes with children much younger than them and were ashamed of attending formal school. Such children would benefit from such makeshift school with a special curriculum that would help them to join vocational training after a prescribed duration. Research is underway to come up with a proper procedure for this.

It is however important to note that although our contribution helped in breaking some barriers and dissolving some tension, achieving total peace and reconciliation in Eldoret is still along way to go and can not be achieved in one or two months. It requires concerted efforts from all the stake holders and gradual but continuous commitment as it touches on some very sensitive historical backgrounds of the country. SfGS-UoN therefore hopes to continuously give the little contribution it can (through members contribution) towards achieving a lasting peace in this area. To help us realize this objective, SfGS-UoN welcomes support from all interested stakeholders.

### UNITED YOUTH FOR PEACE PROJECT IN PHOTOGRAPHS



Members of SfGS-UoN arriving at the Door Church in Langas to begin the Environmental and Public Health Awareness Workshops.



Before beginning the workshops, the project team visited the targeted population in their camps and houses within the slum area so as to familiarize itself with the real life circumstances under which they lived. Through this, the team was able to invite many residents to the workshops since they had a chance to explain in details what their objectives were.



**The Kenya Dream Festival:** Top left: TEEN2012 actors on stage; Top left (Mr. Stephen of RISDEV giving a speech; Bottom (left): the audience following the proceedings; Bottom (right): the theme of the festival communicated on the t-shirts.



**Awareness on Renewable Cooking Energy:** Top left: demonstration on solar cooking technologies, Top right: participants being served the meals cooked from the solar cook kits; Bottom left: Solar cook kits donated to the Door Church; Bottom right: the kits donated to the women group for community kitchen



**Public viewing of the children's drawings:** Through drawings, the children passed on the clear message that they desire to live in peace and harmony with nature as well as their neighbours.



**The volunteers sharing meals with the children:** This special feeding program became the only source of food to most of the children who could not find regular meals at home.



**Tree planting:** The activity was used for peace building as well as environmental conservation



The photos on this page represent the volunteer classes in one of the three teaching stations. In this particular station, young children of school going age who have not been able to attend any formal education were taught the basics skills of reading and writing.

The teachers improvised learning environments/facilities



Even though the learning process was difficult, at the end of the project; the children had made much progress.



These orphaned children had a reason to smile having interacted with the student volunteers. Even as they get back to their tent structure (background), they are happy that they have gained some useful skills and are motivated to continue with education should they be granted the opportunity to do so.



Different health/sanitation conditions such as Jiggers infestation limit the children's concentration in classes





Women Empowerment: Kasarani Women were assisted to register an operational women group – the Amani Kasarani Women Group. **Amani** is a Kiswahili word that means **Peace**.



Sports was used as an important tool for forging peaceful coexistence among the residents of Langas. Mixed teams of youths, women and children played together and interacted freely.



Recognition of participants: The participants, both the children and the women were awarded certificates of participation



### Establishment of a Community Library:

Members of SfGS-UoN collected different reading materials covering different topics as environmental awareness, conflict resolution to share with the Langas community.

The objective of this initiative is to establish a special collection/community library at the children's home where volunteers and well wishers can deposit any useful publications to be used by the Langas community.

In the photo alongside

Sammy Chebon of SfGS-UoN displays some of the publications during the Environmental Awareness Workshop at the Door Church

### PARTNERS/APPRECIATION

SfGS-UoN would like send sincere appreciation to the following for their great contribution to the success of the project:

1. TEEN 2012 team - Assisted in organizing for the Kenya Dream Festival
2. The Rural Initiatives for Sustainable Development (RISDEV)
3. Solar Cookers International - Assisted in organizing the training and demonstration of Integrated Alternative Cooking Technologies
4. Pembe Flour Mills (K) Limited - Provided maize floor used for the lunch feeding program for the children. Few packets were donated o needy families.
5. The Door Church pastor and the congregation - for hosting us and helping us reach out to the community.
6. Mr. and Mrs. Mutua - for hosting one of the makeshift schools in their home compound and assisting with some of the facilities including tents and a room which formed the classrooms.
7. Heritage Primary School – for assisting us with the benches and the ground where we met parents and had sports and games.
8. All volunteers - including Dr. Njenga who helped us acquire the seedlings

Special thanks to all who supported this project in one way or another.

## PROGRESS:

Upon follow up on the project (between 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009), SfGS-UoN was very impressed by the progress. Details of the progress are highlighted below:

- **The Kasarani women** have registered a group - **Amani Kasarani Women Group** and have an operational bank account with a balance of Kshs.3000. From their weekly contribution of Kshs. 20 each. There are 82 members drawn from different ethnic and social backgrounds; an average of 40 members attends the weekly meetings held every Wednesday. They have an elaborate constitution, and a well organized management structure, headed by Chairwomen, Secretary and Treasurer.  
The group has agreed on starting a poultry rearing project. One of the members has donated her plot for this purpose. The only limitation is lack of funds to construct the poultry houses, buy the chicks, feeds and the necessary implements for running the project. In order to realize the project, the group has requested SfGS-UoN to assist in raising funds through writing and submission of proposals to donor agencies and development organizations.
- **The Community Kitchen** is fully operational. The women usually contribute foodstuffs to be cooked at the kitchen and shared whenever they have a joint meeting. New members are also trained by their peers on the use of the technology. The group needs extra financial support to be able to buy and use this technology in their own houses.
- **Registration of Pupils in Public Schools:** Through the contributions of the project team, SfGS-UoN registered thirty pupils in the neighboring public schools. This was possible through negotiations with the school principals to offer them space in the already crowded schools as well as purchasing school uniforms and the first set of exercise books for the pupils. In spite of this effort, many pupils are still out of school. SfGS-UoN is in dire need of additional funds to take the remaining children to school as well as organize more makeshift schools/voluntary classes/special curriculum to reach out to other children in the community especially during the forthcoming December vacations.  
One of the SfGS-UoN members returned to Eldoret between 28<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> October to negotiating with the Eldoret Municipality Education Officer to support some of the children's education. He has written to the neighboring school headmasters to admit some of the children. The attached letter and list show evidence of the communication.
- SfGS-UoN planned a tree planting activity and signing of the **"Seal the Deal"** campaign petitions with the participants of the peace project on 21/09/09 to mark the **Global Climate Action Week**. The report of this is available in a separate document. This presented a good platform to meet and work together with Kasarani groups while evaluating the project.

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**SfGS-UoN appeals to every individual, company or organization to assist with financial resources or other donations in kind to support the Langas Community.**

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