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Volunteerism for Peace in East Africa

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Volunteering is central to any community-centered development intervention. As such, volunteers can contribute substantially to establishing and preserving peace. This paper describes various interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional theoretical perspectives to explain why volunteerism is particularly suited to peacemaking and peacekeeping. Special consideration is given to how involving young volunteers may be highly beneficial to peacemaking and peacekeeping. The paper emphasizes the "added value" of utilizing volunteers in peace and development organizations, and provides specific examples from the Eastern African region that illustrate how volunteerism is being used to prevent conflict, to mediate and transform active conflict, and to reduce the consequences of violent conflict.

Key words: *volunteering, youth, peace, theory*

Introduction

Many East African countries are troubled by inter-ethnic, inter-generational, political, and religious tensions and conflicts. The Lord's Resistance Army, the Somali Civil War, the South Kordofanian conflict, disputed electoral outcomes, opposition over the distribution of national resources, and high youth unemployment are all persistent triggers that have ignited violent conflicts over the years; creating thousands of refugees and internally displaced people in the region. The culmination of years of war and regional conflict deprive people of livelihoods and human security, leaving them vulnerable to disease, hunger, and despair.

Given the magnitude of conflict in the region, there are no easy answers to the search for peace and social cohesion. Nonetheless, multiple actors including transnational organizations, governments, and civil society have all been involved in seeking potential solutions – implementing innovative peace interventions at multiple levels. One idea that is increasingly viewed as critical to successful peacemaking and peacekeeping interventions is "community-centered sustainable development" or "people-centered development" (VOSESA, 2011). Community centered approaches seek to solve problems through interpersonal engagement and action, human relationships, and participatory decision-making in local communities. Volunteering is considered central to successful community-centered development interventions (Leigh et al., 2011).

Volunteers can contribute to establishing and preserving positive peace, which can be defined not just as an absence of war and conflict, but as a set of conditions that mediate ever-present conflicts. Positive peace can prevent conflicts from turning violent, and sustain social and political order. In this paper, we discuss the theoretical perspectives on how volunteerism can contribute to local capacity for establishing and preserving peace. We also provide specific examples of how volunteerism is used to prevent conflict, to mediate or transform active conflict, and to reduce the consequences of violent conflict in the Eastern African region.

Theoretical perspectives on volunteering for peace

In this section, we discuss why volunteering is particularly well-suited to peacemaking and peacekeeping. We outline general principles and theories that illustrate how volunteerism[1] can build social cohesion and bridge social divisions. At the most basic level, interpersonal contact is a precursor to mutual understanding. Direct contact among people from different backgrounds has the potential to make people more comfortable with each other's differences, to reduce anxiety, and to lead to mutual understanding and respect (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). At the interpersonal and intergroup levels, contact theory, social identity theory, and social role theory all suggest that direct interaction among people from different backgrounds will increase opportunities for these groups to receive more accurate information about the "other" and an appreciation of difference—ultimately resulting in less conflict. At the institutional level, volunteers may promote transparent governance as impartial actors during elections or they may act as neutral intermediaries in high conflict situations. The theoretical foundations of these interventions are explored below.

Interpersonal and intergroup theories

Social identity theory posits that greater exposure to an "out-group" widens opportunities for self-integration into external group membership, ultimately leading to greater understanding, acceptance of out-group differences, and re-identification with previous out-groups (Turner, 1982). Likewise, contemporary contact theory and social learning theories stress that the more time people spend interacting, the greater likelihood they will converge on superordinate shared goals (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and the greater the likelihood that they will experience cognitive dissonance, which is necessary to stimulate reflection and ultimate intergroup understanding (Pitner, 2007).

Intergroup contact theory states that increased contact between diverse groups has the potential to reduce inaccurate perceptions of the "other," thereby increasing intergroup tolerance and understanding (Allport, 1954). However, merely bringing diverse peoples into common space is not always a sufficient condition to guarantee that intergroup learning will occur, especially among those who may hold strong views (Amir, 1969). Recent research in Kenya by Kimenyi and Kimenyi (2011) supports the view that interactions alone are not adequate. In interviews with those engaged in violent ethnic conflict in the aftermath of the 2007 disputed presidential poll, they found that significant conflict remains between groups despite the finding that "different ethnic groups interact with each other on a regular basis primarily through trade, in schools and places of worship" (Kimenyi & Kimenyi, 2011). Connecting people in common space is perhaps necessary but insufficient.

Contact theory suggests that mutual understanding is more likely when the people interacting can converge on shared goals. Peace can be promoted as people cooperate to achieve these "superordinate goals" (Sherif, 1958). When diverse groups work together to reach a desired aim, "friendship preferences shift from almost exclusive preference for in-group members toward

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[1] We adopt the 2001 United Nations General Assembly's definition of volunteerism to mean actions carried out voluntarily, according to an individual's own free will, and not as an obligation stipulated by law, contract or academic requirement. The action should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward and lastly, the action should be for the common good (cited in Leigh, R., Smith, D. H., Lough, B. J., Mati, J. M., Giesing, C., León, M. J., Haski-Leventhal, D., Strassburg, S. (2011). *State of the World's volunteerism report: Universal values for global well being*. In P. Hockenos (Ed.). Bonn, Germany: United Nations Volunteers (UNV)).

increased inclusion of members from the 'antagonists'" (Sherif, 1958). Shared goals tend to produce friendly attitudes, mutual understanding, and increased tolerance towards out-group members, their ways of life, and cultures (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Such objectives and interests may include communal resources, watering points, pasture for livestock, roads, market spaces, schools, etc. (Khadiagala & Mati, 2011). Indeed, when shared goals are not met during contact, intergroup tensions, animosity, and prejudice may actually increase despite frequent interaction (Amir, 1969). Volunteer projects that are designed to accomplish a "superordinate" social goal and involve multiple ethnic groups have the potential to break down barriers that separate diverse ethnic and social groups.

Contact theory also asserts that mutual understanding is more likely when people in contact have the perception of relatively equal status. Interactions that take place during trade or regular market transactions rarely occur on equal footing. Likewise, discordant dynamics inherent in trade and bartering are not necessarily conducive to peaceful relations. It is, therefore, not highly surprising that conflict persists despite sometimes daily interactions between ethnic groups.[2] On the other hand, relationships among volunteers have the potential to be much more egalitarian. The majority of service projects are designed for volunteers to come together on equal ground—offering their hands and hearts to accomplish a common goal. Moreover, wherever volunteer actions begin organically and informally, especially within conflict situations, volunteers are likely to work from a position of mutual respect.

Volunteering can also help people experience a heightened degree of empathy and a desire to understand the needs and concerns of those with whom they serve. According to Mead's *theory of social roles*, as people engage in human-helping roles, they gain a greater capacity to set aside their ego, thereby improving their ability to look at problems from multiple perspectives (Mead, 1934). When people engage in a volunteer service role, the experience is more effective than other exchange initiatives at encouraging empathic, perspective-taking learning that is required for mutual understanding (Reiman, 1999). In this sense, volunteering may be more effective at promoting peace than other programs that bring people from diverse groups together.

Institutional theories

Institutional theories focus on larger social, economic, and political structures that produce or support conflict. These institutions perpetuate the formal rules and informal norms that provide the impetus for people to engage in conflict (North, 1990). For instance, in the case of 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, deep socio-cultural and political issues such as inequitable resource allocation, land issues, historical and post-colonial grievances, political corruption, and cultural and ethnic stereotypes all acted together to produce a "simmering volcano only waiting to explode"(Oucho, 2010).

Volunteers are typically not able to resolve deep institutional issues through individual action alone. However, people-centered development is founded on the premise that people have the capacity to "determine their own futures" and acting together, they can change the informal norms and attitudes that determine behaviors in their communities, as well as the formal rules and laws that

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[2] Indeed, as already noted, Kimenyi and Kimenyi's (2011) research clearly points out that this is the reality in Kenya's Rift Valley province.

structure community relations (Kimenyi & Kimenyi, 2011; UNDP, 2011, p. 4).[3] Moreover, volunteer sending organizations often have structured reflection and goal setting sessions as programmatic components. Periods of reflection and dialogue can help volunteers gain a fuller understanding and broader appreciation of the issues that drive conflict (for instance gendered dimensions of conflict) that politicians or other policymakers fail to notice. Case studies suggest that local volunteers can disseminate a broad understanding of these issues to communities in conflict. In the past, volunteers have organized education workshops on peace and community safety using drama, songs, and poems in a bid to sensitize youth about sexual violence, youth labor, and forced conscription of young people into armed groups.[4] Others have helped provide farming tools for women and have opened nurseries, day care centers and schools for displaced children. These examples illustrate how volunteers can act to change informal norms and ethnic biases within their communities.

In the absence of equitable education, health, social services, and economic opportunity, volunteers can also play a key role—thereby reducing much of the animosity arising from inequitable resource allocation. At the political level, because volunteers are not typically associated with formal government systems, they may also encourage transparent governance through civic and democratic activism. Experience has demonstrated, however, that volunteerism can also be used to incite violence when civic engagement is not targeted in the right direction. For instance, ethnic divisions during elections in Eastern Africa are tightly tied to political candidacy, and voluntary engagement with particular political campaigns can be highly divisive (Kimenyi & Kimenyi, 2011). If volunteering is to be used for peaceful purposes, the volunteer roles must remain fundamentally neutral and non-competitive.

Theory also predicts that the volunteers from outside a regional or ethnic group may make a significant contribution to peacemaking as third-party intermediaries (Ma, 1992; Shapiro, 2010). As outsiders, volunteers that come from outside the region, including international volunteers, may play an impartial role in mediating high conflict situations, and may be more creative and flexible in their approach to solving conflict. Although the potential for neutrality exists, it is important that volunteers as outsiders share the same fundamental values of groups they are working with. While "informational and social diversity" may decrease conflict, "value diversity" and other forms of difference may exacerbate conflict (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale 1999). For this reason, volunteers from within the region with a high degree of neutrality may be preferable to international volunteers in service as mediators. Although change at the structural level happens incrementally, the work of ordinary volunteers can make a significant contribution to peace and development in their own groups and communities, as well as to larger social, political, and economic institutions.

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[3] See also Khadiagala and Mati (2011) for evidence of individuals of different warring communities in Kenya and generally Sub-saharan Africa respectively, voluntarily coming together to make peace with one another.

[4] Mavungu, M. E. (2010). Fact-finding research on international volunteerism and peace in the DRC. Unpublished research report. The GoDown Arts Centre (Nairobi) peace caravans with the Kenya Burning photographic exhibition of images captured during the post-election violence of 2007/8 also provides a reflective opportunity for the audience to remember the tragic post-election events of 2008 and reinforce sentiments that this should never happen again (see http://www.thegodownartscentre.com/recent-progs/kenya_burning.html?CSRF_TOKEN=). The USAID program in Kenya also reports the use of drama to propagate peace especially in light of recent International Criminal Court indictments of four Kenyans to stand trial for participation in the 2007/8 post-election violence. (see http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/transition_initiatives/country/kenya/topic1011.html).

Youth volunteering and peacebuilding

Previous research suggests that peace interventions involving volunteers may have a greater effect on youth than on older members of society. In a study of peace interventions in the Rift Valley, attitudes of youth toward reconciliation were significantly more positive than the attitudes of older people (Kimenyi & Kimenyi, 2011). While the youth reported that the older generation had told them to "hate anyone from this tribe." youth from different tribes who participated in volunteer peace initiatives reported being less suspicious of each other, more trusting of members from other ethnic groups, and stronger in their belief that the different communities can live together peacefully (Kimenyi & Kimenyi, 2011).

During young years, ideas and mindsets about the world are still being formulated and may be easier to change. In addition, young people may have had less time to ingrain deep-seated prejudices than the older generation. Consequently, targeted interventions based on volunteer engagement may have a greater effect on the rising generation. Kimenyi and Kimenyi cite additional reasons for focusing peace building efforts on youth:

> First, during the conflict, it is the youth who were mobilized to commit the atrocities. Second, changing the attitudes of the youth towards violence is likely to have salutary benefits of influencing the older generations whose long-term held negative attitudes are more difficult to change. The youth also have higher education than the older generations and are more amenable to change. Finally, it is the youth who have higher stakes in the establishment of peace. In essence peace interventions targeting the youth, if successful, could have major and long-term positive effects of establishing harmonious communities (2011).

A recent study on youth volunteer exchange models in Southern and Eastern Africa found that youth volunteer exchange programs encouraged multiculturalism and a greater appreciation for people of different ethnicities and nationalities by positively impacting attitudes and values especially in regard to tolerance and empathy with people from other cultures (Mati, 2012). Such interventions teach youth that "it is possible to live peacefully in an environment with mixed races and cultures" (Mati, 2012).

The "added value" of volunteers in peace and development organizations

Peacekeeping missions handled exclusively by technical officers and full-time staff have often been criticized as operating in an overly hierarchical system that underestimates local skills and local management, resulting in a lack of ownership, demoralized staff, inadequate ethnic diversity, and exclusion of women (Devereux, 2008; Morgan, 2002; Pratt, 2002; Tarp & Hjertholm, 2000). Alternatively, an increased commitment and engagement in social projects by volunteers is predicted by multiple theories of volunteer engagement (Smith, 2000).[5] In comparison with technical officers, community members report noticeable differences in motivations and levels of commitment among volunteers. In particular, they report that volunteers go "beyond the call of duty," sacrifice their

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[5] See Smith, D. H. (2000). *Grassroots Associations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Refer specifically to Leisure General Activity Theory and Active-Effective Character Theory.

personal interests, and are more apt to persevere in the midst of frustration and conflict (Mavungu, 2010).

Local volunteers are perceived as an indispensable civilian component, performing a range of actions which reflect knowledge of local environment, traditions, and values rooted in the local community. Consequently, local volunteers may elicit trust, gain rapport, and generate greater understanding among local residents (Mavungu, 2010). As a result, local volunteers may be effective partners in building social cohesion, engendering confidence and gaining the trust of community members, thereby helping to empower and mobilize people for peaceful purposes (Lewis, 2005).

Volunteers also bring fresh and optimistic perspectives to their work. Staff from development agencies, who have often been working in high conflict zones for long periods, frequently become demoralized. Volunteers may be more ingenuous and less disheartened about the difficulties associated with peacekeeping. Some informants observe that the idealism and affirming mentality of new volunteers makes a significant difference to community members who have struggled for years in high-conflict situations (Chief of the Peace Division, United Nations Volunteers, personal communication; Leigh et al., 2011;).

Examples from the region

Conflict prevention

One the best ways to build and maintain peace is to prevent conflict. Strategies designed to prevent conflict are ingrained throughout most of the programs described below—from character education programs to those promoting gainful employment. Among these, one prevention program stands out as an intervention involving local public administration. Peace Cops is a voluntary initiative established by the Kenya Administration Police, which seeks to build bridges among tribes by integrating peacebuilding with community policing activities. Peace Cops intermingle with target communities, aiming to gain the trust of community members as they learn about potential tribal and situational conflicts. The Peace Cops service is aimed at providing early warning signals for potentially explosive situations that could lead to violence. In addition, Peace Cops organize training workshop for young leaders to transfer knowledge, skills, and competencies that can be used to sustain peace and development (Global Peace Youth Corps Kenya, 2012).

Encouraging democratic dialogue and responsive governance

Kimenyi and Kimenyi observe that "the second most common cause of conflict and distrust in the region is linked to "discrimination by government and politicians" (2011). Such discrimination may point to the failure of state institutions to manage differences. As Jenson (1998) argues:

> Value differences are inevitable in a modern pluralist society; they are not a problem in and of themselves. The literature on social cohesion clearly indicates that problems arise when institutions, particularly public institutions, fail to manage conflicts over recognition, legitimacy of claims and do not provide sufficient space for democratic dialogue."

Nzomo (2002) adds that, while conflict is inevitable, it can be largely mediated by proactive governance institutions:

> While tensions are bound to arise in any society in the course of interaction between various competing social identities and beliefs, such tensions cannot degenerate into serious conflict, unless the country's existing governance institutions, policies and ideologies are not adequately responsive to the diverse social identities and instead, tend to encourage social fragmentation rather than social cohesion."

These statements assert that investments in social institutions may help ease tensions that exacerbate conflicts by articulating social problems and attendant priorities, especially for marginalized groups who often receive the least political attention. Land issues and resource misallocation are longstanding problems that are best met through public policy interventions rather than on grassroots and community-centered sustainable development alone.

Volunteerism is seen as one of the ways for promoting democratic dialogue, attitudes, and behaviors, and also enables citizens to hold state authorities accountable and to enhance the transparency of administration. In countries like Kenya, ensuring multi-ethnic representation in local volunteer development committees would help ensure transparency and cosmopolitan inclusion. For instance, the role of constituency development committees in electoral constituencies or volunteer positions in advocacy-based programs like the Ujamma Center can help to ensure that the voices of all groups are represented (Hildebrand & Holst, 2010).

Volunteerism can also influence how people from different ethnic groups relate to one another more harmoniously. In Kenya, UN Volunteers contributed to social cohesion with volunteers acting as mediators for peace during the 2010 constitutional referendum by diffusing tensions between Kuria and the Luo, who were on opposing sides of the proposed constitution (Bohoko, 2010). A UN Volunteer reached out to the National Cohesion and Integration Commission to conduct peace and consensus building meetings between the Kuria and the Luo communities. Both communities agreed to maintain peace during and after the referendum. In addition, volunteers acted as peace coordinators, identifying and initiating social projects to be undertaken by the Maasai and the Kuria people along the Kuria/Transmara border under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional affairs.

As advocates, volunteers can challenge public institutions and the perceptions and definitions of what constitutes public issues. In the Northern Uganda war, for instance, volunteers have played an active role in bringing the Ugandan conflict under the national and international radar. When the conflict broke, it was initially deemed an ethnic Acholi problem. However, volunteer activists were able to bring this problem to national and international attention as the Lords' Resistance Army rebels crossed borders in Southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic. Moreover, the abductions of children, especially girls, intensified as the war progressed. Mothers of the abducted girls in Aboke formed the Concerned Parents Association (CPA) as a local voluntary support groups to raise awareness of the abductions. The CPA garnered international attention as they highlighted the tragedy of the Aboke Girls and pushed for the indictment of the LRA leadership and return of the girls. Other voluntary groups have emerged on issues such as acid attacks in Uganda and Bangladesh as well as for cross-border conflict in West Africa (Bohoko, 2010). These initiatives put pressure on states to invest in achieving peace through political means (Africarising, 2008; Wacha, 2006).

Character education and other normative interventions

In addition to highlighting the importance of political economy, institutional theory also asserts that informal norms must be changed to encourage trust and reduce pre-existing prejudice and biases (Keefer & Knack, 2005). In this regard, a recent study by Kimenyi and Kimenyi found that "the greatest source of mistrust, an alarming 82%, is due to ethnic hatred…We grew up being told to hate this tribe because they took our land... The older generation misled us and told us to hate anyone from this tribe" (2011). Such prejudices need to be eradicated if lasting peace and social cohesion is to be established.

A recent study by VOSESA found that volunteerism offers opportunities and platforms through which normative prejudices can be challenged (Mati & Perold, 2012). In the study, a young Kenyan volunteer pointed out that the exchange program with Tanzanian youths helped them understand that other people have a right to determine their own way of life:

> When you come back to Kenya you start seeing things beyond tribal demarcations… on the issue of peace, we have learnt how Tanzania managed to create national unity and greatly reduced tribes as a factor for allegiance or privilege. If you look at Tanzania, all the Presidents so far have come from not very big or influential tribes, the current President is from a very small tribe in Tanzania, and that did not hinder him from gaining national support.

The above quote suggests the sort consciousness that volunteer exchange programs may help to generate. It further suggests that young people exposed to environments where there is an appreciation of differences are most likely to embrace diversity and be more accommodating.

As another example, the Kenyan Ministry of Youth in partnership with UNDP-Kenya recently began a youth exchange program entitled the *Tuelewane Project*, which aims to train and educate youth on peace and conflict resolution in conflict-prone communities. Each youth leader is trained to organize initiatives such as peace rallies, community clean-ups, religious activities, community soccer initiatives, or engagement with community radio to spread messages of reconciliation and to promote peace. This exchange program is expected to contribute directly to peacebuilding as "youth travel to other communities and engage in dialogue with the intergeneration members of these communities in the endeavor to broaden their world views, promote diversity, inculcate tolerance and promote acquisition of technical and life skills." The program promotes youth peer mentorship and intergenerational dialogue, while also encouraging an entrepreneurial culture amongst the youth (UNDP Office of Communications, n.d.). Similar programs such as The Young Ambassadors for Peace and the Jubail Area Mutual Aid Association (Jamaa) also provide leadership training and education in reconciliation strategies for volunteer "ambassadors" (YFWP – Kenya, n.d.). Jamaa is a program initiated by young people in Burundi, which uses peer mentorship to mediate conflict, and to engage in moderated debate on topics that often lead to ethnic division (Insight on Conflict, *JAMAA Association*).

While some programs cross community borders to promote mutual understanding and tolerance, other programs cross national borders. For instance, UVIKUITA (2006) hosts international volunteer work camps across Tanzania with a key objective to "promote the culture of peace by developing integration, solving problems peaceful, reducing enemy images and respecting

differences." Likewise, volunteers with the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) promote conflict management, peace building, and reconciliation through mutual work projects. Such cross-cultural exchange programs engage people from across the world, including both North-South and South-South exchange. Volunteers live together and share life in the local hosting community, with the goal of fostering international understanding and promoting peace and human rights.

Promoting gainful employment

The echoed words of Mahatma Gandhi, that "poverty is the worst form of violence," illustrate that poverty is both a means to violent conflict as well as an end in itself. Resource misallocation and the inequitable distribution of assets are frequently linked with intergroup conflict and class warfare. In this sense, perhaps the most effective volunteer strategies are those that span peace and development (World Bank, 2009). As articulated by Nzomo (2002), "While it is true that poverty generates tensions as people scramble for limited resources, such tensions cannot deteriorate into war if institutions and mechanisms exist that afford all citizens a conducive and enabling environment to earn a decent livelihood."

One avenue to promote gainful employment as part of volunteer schemes is the Kazi Kwa Vijana program in Kenya. While Kazi Kwa Vijana (Work for Youth) funds have been misappropriated by politicians, it has nonetheless offered some remedy to massive youth unemployment, while also providing opportunities for the youth to develop leadership skills and participate in nation building, in areas such as afforestation (OECD, n.d.). Although Kazi Kwa Vijana is not marketed as a service scheme, it has the hallmarks of a stipend service program, as the youth are not compensated at market rates for their work. The appeal of programs like Kazi Kwa Vijana is their promotion of gainful employment and microenterprise and microfinance for youth, while also contributing to society in such areas as environmental conservation, development, and peace.

To effectively tap the potential of youth in the region, greater efforts need to be put into service programs that promote microenterprise and microfinance for youth especially in inter-ethnic businesses that create employment for young people.

Post-conflict reconstruction initiatives with youth that link volunteerism to employment may help to rebuild infrastructure, while also contributing to wider goals of peace and reconciliation. One such program in Burundi, Jeunesse en Reconstruction du Monde en Destruction (Youth in Reconstruction of the World), engages youth to help build homes, hospitals, and other public projects (Wijeyesekera, 2011). Such initiatives not only address immediate needs but may also help to promote gainful employment as a key component of any sustainable peacebuilding processes. Volunteerism to Employment programs may also have a significant impact on the normative evaluations that youth hold of themselves and of society. As Wijeyesekera noted in her review of youth volunteering in Africa:

> "In countries such as Sierra Leone, where young soldiers struggle to re-integrate into normal life service-led programs such as The Reintegration Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG) have been an effective tool in helping them to develop a more positive outlook as well as develop their identity as young citizens" (2011).

Peace movements

Peace caravans and peace tents have also been used as platforms for ensuring interpersonal interactions and for solving community problems. Peace Caravan, organized by the Voluntary Youth Philanthropists, World Vision International and Peacenet, enlists youth volunteers from different communities to promote diversity and reconciliation through cultural events such as creative art and theatrical performances. Benindanga Club-Ruyigi, created in 1999 by women from diverse ethnic groups in Burundi—as well as the Tubiyage Association—perform similar activities as they promote peace and reconciliation through cultural activities including theatre, song, dance, and festivals (Insight on Conflict, *Benindanga Club-Ruyigi*). As another example, volunteers from the Amahoro Youth Club in Burundi organized a peace parade involving over 100 bikers who had previously been incited to engage in political violence (Insight on Conflict, 2010).

Peace caravans and peace tents are a relatively new approach to peacebuilding that explore new ways for mediation at the community level. The "peace tents" are placed in neutral locations without threat where a peace mediation process is undertaken with all parties in conflict. Such tents have been placed in Nyanza Province and Rift Valley Provinces, which were previous hotspots for violence. The peace tents are manned by trained peace mediators and other local peacebuilding organizations. They also serve as resource centers where conflict related information can be obtained by government agencies, local communities and civil society organizations. Peace mediators have also been spearheading healing and reconciliation processes in communities worst affected by post-election violence (PeaceNet Kenya, 2009).

Sports for peace

Sports can also be used to promote interaction and understanding among diverse groups. Moderating ethnic divisions among young people, sports for peace emphasizes good sportsmanship and inter-tribal cooperation as a contribution to peacemaking. As youth from different tribes participate in these programs, playing together on the same teams, they develop peaceful relations and friendships. Youth work towards transforming their own lives through sports rather than less pro-social activities such as cattle rustling. For example, the Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation established in 2003 organizes sporting events to build trust and social cohesion between the warring communities in various parts of Kenya and neighboring Uganda. As another example, a major tournament in the summer of 2009 brought together around 70,000 people who participated in Sports for Peace games (YFWP – Kenya, n.d.). As a result of these programs and related peace curriculum, youth who began with the assertion that "we can play against them, not with them" found that reconciliation and mutual understanding was possible (USAID – Kenya, 2012).

Working towards superordinate goals

As described earlier, contact theory and social identity theory posit that, as diverse groups of people come together in the same space to work towards a common goal, they have the potential to gain a greater understanding of each other. They may be more likely to develop favorable attitudes towards reconciliation. For instance, research with youth groups in the Rift Valley region found that interethnic youth groups working on a similar project were more likely to report high trust in people of other ethnic groups (Kimenyi & Kimenyi, 2011).

The case of the Kikuyus for change, a group of young activists from the Kikuyu community in Kenya have been challenging "tribal bonding" by reaching out to young people in different parts of the country as well as organizing inter-ethnic dialogues and interactions (Leigh et al., 2011; Mati & Perold, 2012). Kimenyi and Kimenyi cited a demonstration of the emergence of Kikuyu and Kalenjin youth groups in Kuresoi and Molo driven in part by desperation that "forced" an agreement out of mutual interest for the survival of the communities (2011). These organic groups fostered the development of a peace zone, "that made it possible for different ethnic groups to engage in largely barter trade, exchanging -milk, sugar, and other foodstuffs etc.":

> There was no signing of any memorandums nor was the agreement facilitated by government or peace institutions; the simple handshake of former rivals marked the inner transformations of individuals and to the thawing of relationships between previously warring groups (2011, p. 3)

Another notable example is the Global Peace Youth Corps, the youth arm of the Global Peace Festival Foundation, which aims to promote peace as young volunteers participate in social development projects. In East African nations, the Global Peace Youth Corps has worked with the East Africa Peace Service Corps to organize cross-border youth service with the aim of helping volunteers work together to help resolve social conflicts, while also working on projects to address health care, poverty, and climate change (Global Peace Youth Corps, n.d.). Past examples of these efforts include the cleanup of the Nairobi River, and distributing water pumps for agricultural use in the Rift Valley (Olsen, 2010). The Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) also engages volunteers from the local communities adjacent to the Kikuyu Escarpment forests to promote environmental sustainability. Volunteers engage in forest restoration programs, facilitate peer learning and exchange visits, and contribute to peaceful coexistence of several ethnic groups in the area (KENVO, 2008).

Local initiatives by community leaders

Local peace initiatives have also been used for peacebuilding efforts. The leaders call on the voluntary participation of members of their community to resolve new and ongoing conflicts. For example, a community-driven peace initiative between Turkana and Pokot tribes in Northern Kenya, where tribal conflicts over resources are common, allowed for the voluntary migration of livestock during the recent drought as two neighboring communities agreed to share grazing and water resources (Nation TV, 2011; ReliefWeb, 2012).

The State of the World Volunteering Report also documents how the Mano River Union Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) was launched in 2000 to facilitate the involvement of women leaders in the peace process. The porous frontiers between these countries have been facilitating the flow of weapons and combatants and have been the scene of intense violent conflicts and refugee movements. Women leaders, rural women, religious women, and businesswomen from the four countries that the Mano River traverses (Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone) have been able to challenge the stereotypical perceptions that peace building is the preserve of males (Leigh et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Enduring peace begins in the hearts and minds of people. As a people-centered development approach, volunteerism engages people in mutual collaboration across ethnic, tribal, and political divides. When people engage in human-helping roles, they may expand their empathic perspectives, breaking down prejudice and intolerance that lead to violence (Mead, 1934). Case studies suggest that volunteers can make significant contributions to peace and reconciliation in their own groups and communities, as well in the larger social, political, and economic institutions that perpetuate tribalism, political division, and conflict. While some pilot research has been done to demonstrate the potential of volunteerism to promote peace and social cohesion, rigorous evaluation is needed to understand the direct impact of various interventions on peace in the region overall, as well as to evaluate the efficacy of individual demonstration programs.

Moreover, volunteering is not cost-free and the effective facilitation of volunteerism—particularly formal volunteerism—is enhanced by a supportive and enabling infrastructure. An institutional environment that enables and encourages volunteerism can expand the impact of volunteers that are already working on peace initiatives in the region. For instance, ensuring the safety of volunteers in high-conflict zones can encourage volunteer participation and can multiply potential contributions of volunteers. Funding to scale up successful volunteer projects could leverage these potentially cost-effective interventions, and greatly enhance peace in the region.

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