

PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS IN TURKANA START BEARING FRUIT

For the past three years, IOM under the aegis of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) has registered positive results by promoting human security in Loima and Turkana Central sub counties in the larger Turkana region.

IOM in partnership with five UN agencies- UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, WHO and FAO have been implementing the project that has a focus on six pillars namely, food security, health security, job security, promotion of education and protection through fostering peace and prevention of child labour.

With a focus to promote the right to life, liberty and security of person, IOM had been undertaking peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities in Turkana.

With these activities previously perceived as the reserve of community elders- who were elderly men, a new approach to involve women and youth in peace building activities was adopted and has started bearing fruits.

Since 2012, women and youth have been engaged in various peace building and conflict prevention activities such as sports for peace, women peace crusades, leading peace dialogues and peace trainings among other activities in a bid to promote peace among conflicting communities Turkana and Pokot as well as cross border communities - Tepeth and Matheniko of Uganda.

Women Group

One such notable achievement is a 15 member women group called Lorengippi and Nawuiyapong Women Peace Crusaders, who have defied cultural norms and have come to be christened as the women crusaders because of the exemplary role they have played by pushing men (elders and youth-warriors) into committing themselves to resolutions reached during peace dialogues.

The women who live in Lorengippi - Nawuiyapong pastoralist's migration corridor have come out strongly to advocate for peace, in light of recurrent conflict.

This corridor has been a target of intense conflict pitting the Pokot and Turkana communities against one another in a violent and often fatal resource-based competition.

To emphasize their seriousness, the women have now taken an initiative to attend meetings between the community elders, so as to exert pressure on the elders towards making peaceful resolutions.

Furthermore, in contrast to the practice among pastoralist communities where women have in the past motivated young men to participate in raids, the women crusaders are now acting as change agents and discouraging their young men from such illicit activities.

A recent peace dialogue session between the two communities took an interesting perspective when the peace crusaders threatened to bury what they call "tools of birth", such as razor blades, breast milk among other items, as a curse to young men who are not committed to peace and reconciliation along the

Lorengippi - Nawuiyapong corridor. Such a curse is culturally dreaded, as the cursed lot would be killed during raids or loses all the cattle, considered valuable assets, they try to protect.

Youth Group

On the other hand, youth from the two conflicting communities Pokot and Turkana are engaged on ball games for men and women. These sporting activities are used as avenues for raising awareness for peace building and conflict prevention in the communities. The benefits of these peace activities are now being experienced as incidences of inter- communal conflict in the area have reduced over a period of three years, with the last major raid along the Lorengippi- Nawuiyapong corridor reported in December 2013.

Peace Centre:

In a bid to foster peace and reconciliation, IOM will officially hand over the Lokiriama Peace and Cultural Centre to the communities during the commemoration of the Lokiriama Peace Accord during the International Day of Peace to be held on 21 September 2015.

The peace and cultural centre is set to be allocation where the community will hold peace and reconciliation meetings, spearheaded by the community members- more so the youth. It will also act as a resource centre that will house documentation of best practices in peace building.



Women crusaders from Pokot and Turkana communities share a meal as a sign of peaceful interaction



Youth involved in sports for peace campaign, organized by Naloo Youth Group as a channel to promote peaceful interaction among conflicting communities.