

VIJANA AMKENI SASA INITIATIVE: CREATING A PEACEFUL SOCIETY IN KENYA

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In 2007, Kenya's disputed presidential election triggered an explosion of violence that killed more than 1,000¹ people and displaced an estimated 500,000 others. Youth were highly involved in this violence both as victims and as perpetrators. As the country braces for another general election in late 2012 or early 2013, experts are already predicting violence and signs of renewed tension are evident. Our project is aimed to ensure such violence never happens again by simultaneously breaking this cycle of youth involvement in election violence and empowering the youth to be agents of peace and non-violence in their societies. This project is threefold: first, we will partner with Vijana Amkeni Sasa Initiative (VASI) to sponsor a workshop on creating a peaceful society in VASI's annual youth conference. Second, we will sponsor a guest speaker on ingredients for a peaceful society at the conference. Third, we will launch a nationwide "youth for peace" media campaign prior to the election.

Historical Context: Kenya has experienced post-election violence since the introduction of a multiparty system in 1992. In December 2007, this violence reached its climax when the country's disputed presidential election provoked a fatal crisis that plunged the country into deadly violence. Many of the grievances that helped trigger past electoral violence continue to plague Kenya's citizens. Tensions remain around issues including inequality, ethnic division, lack of land reform, corruption and high rates of youth unemployment. Notable is the increasing² youth involvement in post-election violence.

Objective and Vision: We recognize the increased involvement of youth in violence-related activities is rooted in lack of opportunities for youth combined with the misuse of the youth by politicians in political campaigns to perpetuate violence in exchange for handouts. Our workshop will enlighten Kenya's youth on the importance of peace in the society, equip them with non-violent ways and tools to deal with disputes, and emphasize the role they have to play before, during and after the election.

The Project: We recognized that it would be very hard to get the desired number of high-quality participants if we were to organize and hold our own independent conference. We are therefore tapping into VASI's existing conference. VASI conducts workshops on youth leadership, youth empowerment and entrepreneurship. By careful recruiting from all 210 districts in Kenya at a grassroots level, VASI aims to engage the young population and communities in Kenya and beyond by creating a powerful, informed, economically empowered and motivated youth generation. While the existing conference attracts about 12,000 applicants, it is usually able to accommodate only 7800.

The architects of this project believe that a workshop on peace, nonviolence and conflict resolution in VASI's annual conference is the missing piece of the puzzle and will effectively complement other programs that are traditionally run in the conference. In October 2011, VASI's organizing committee agreed to partner with us (if funded). With our partnership, 2,000 additional applicants will be able to attend the conference.

Workshop: At the VASI conference, which is scheduled for the week of August 6th, 2012, we will sponsor a four-day workshop, "Creating a Peaceful Society." The workshop will focus on the use of non-violence to

¹ Roberts, Mara J, Conflict Analysis of the 2007 Post-election Violence in Kenya, New Dominion Philanthropy Metrics, 2009, 14.

² Corp, Mercy. *Understanding Political Violence Among Youth*. Issue brief no. 123. 2011,4

resolve conflicts and how youth in Kenya can embrace their diversity and live peacefully and prosperously with each other. The workshop will be divided into four one-day sessions on peace and conflict resolution, youth and politics, tools and practices for nonviolent living, and nonviolence as a tool for change. Participants will rotate through each of these sessions so that, by the fourth day of the workshop, all the participants (we anticipate a total of 2000) will have attended each session.

The format used will be very similar to the one used in other VASI workshops. The morning workshop will involve a warm-up activity followed by an expert-led discussion. The afternoon session will be more interactive where the participants will watch related films, hold small group discussions and brainstorm on possible applications of concepts learned. In the evening, the participants will work in groups to design potential projects that they can implement in their communities. There will be an intensive one-week training prior to the conference during which the leaders will design the contents of their sessions. At the end of the workshop we will ask participants to discuss the content and lessons from the workshop with their peer groups as well as partner with other youths to implement their projects when they return home to their communities. Each member of our team has had experience running similar workshops at VASI. Each session will have one main leader and three other assistants who will facilitate the small group discussions.

Guest Speaker: Support from the Projects for Peace program will allow us to sponsor one guest speaker to speak to all 10,000 participants on the ingredients of a peaceful society. (We have identified possible speakers, and have invited one and are awaiting her response.) The speaker will tie this theme to the role of the youth in politics and specifically the role they must play to ensure peaceful elections in the forthcoming election.

Media Campaign: We will run a nationwide campaign through the local media from August 16th to 31st. Traditionally, most youths are very active and vulnerable to politicians using them as campaign tools just before and after an election. Our media campaign is therefore strategically scheduled in the middle of the Kenyan presidential campaigns, in anticipation of an election in late 2012. This media campaign will be targeting 10 local radio broadcasts across the country. Our campaign strategy is to use young Kenyan celebrities to pass a message to youth to shun any act of violence, encourage positive campaigns and a call for free and fair elections in Kenya. These celebrities include some of the conference leaders as well as other young Kenyans in our networks.

The Team: We carefully chose workshop leaders who have used nonviolence to bring change in their society. All the leaders recruited for the workshop worked with the communities affected by the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008 to help them reconcile with their neighbors. Four of the leaders are graduates of African Leadership Academy (ALA) where they took courses on effective non-violent leadership and youth activism. Benjamin Munyao, a sophomore at Colorado College and the project leader, is a graduate from ALA and, in 2009 while at school in South Africa, organized a group of youth with his classmates that led a nationwide campaign against the xenophobic attacks towards foreigners. Collins Mukaria, a sophomore at Nairobi University, was on the frontline condemning the 2008 violence and strongly pushing for truth and justice. Joseph Munyambanza, a first-year at Westminster College, MO, rose from a refugee in Uganda to help the refugees develop a strong, solid identity and is actively pioneering for reconciliation and justice to the war victims in Congo. Nicholas Kithama, our media campaign leader, holds a degree in social media and now co-hosts a renowned talk show (Vijana amkeni, which translates to “Youth arise”) in a local radio station in Kenya.

The workshop advisor, Mr. Koigi Wamwere, has been in the forefront of peaceful demonstrations, youth empowerment and freedom in Kenya since 1980. Mr. Koigi Wamwere and a leading youth activist, Ms. Beatrice Ndung’u, will lead the one-week intense expert training on non-violence practices, conflict resolution and youth activism.

Budget

We anticipate costs to be \$12,700. The team will raise the additional \$2,700. Three of the five people in the leadership team have worked successfully together to raise funds for previous projects. Experience has told us that if we can raise more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the funds required, it is much easier to raise the rest from individual donors and supporters in our networks. Our strategy to raise this remaining \$2,700 is to ask for help from our individual donors as well as capable participants to donate an optional amount into the project. Below is the cost breakdown.

		\$ Amount
The Workshop		
	Space Rental	2,500
	Equipment Rental	1,000
	Air Transportation	1,800
	Accommodation	2,000
	Food and Other Necessities	2,000
	Workshop Leader Training	1,500
Guest Speaker		
	Guest Speaker's Compensation	100
Nationwide Campaign		
	Local Radio Campaign	1,000
	Billboard Space Rental	500
	Publications	800
	Misc. Expenses	500
Total		<u>\$12,700</u>