

Vijana Amkeni Sasa Initiative
Kenya
Colorado College
Benjamin Munyao, Kenya, Colorado College
Collonius Mukari, Kenya, Nairobi University
Eddy Oketch, Kenya, Trinity College

Section 1

The goal for Vijana Amkeni Sasa Initiative (VASI) was to enlighten the youth of Kenya 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 March 2013 general election. Our short-term goal was to ensure Kenya has a peaceful general election/transition and the youths understand and defend the new constitution. The long-term goal of our efforts was to equip and motivate local youth leaders and groups to actively engage in championing for peace and prosperity in their community.

VASI partnered with other organizations, with the main partner being Peace for Africa and Economic Development (PAD), in an effort to fund-raise and collectively mobilize resources for the National Youth Peace, Enterprise and Leadership Forum, a conference with 500 participants representing all 47 counties in Kenya that was held August 19th-26th in Nakuru. Other partner organizations included Kenya One (which provided entertainment) and Spring Break Kenya (which provided youth networks). In addition to broadening our resources, these collaborations aided with event publicity and organization.

Upon arrival, the conference participants were grouped into Kiama families (“kiama” are popular forums where our ancestors used to discuss important issues in the society). These kiama provided social groups in which participants could bond and network together and discuss some of the issues they face as youth leaders. In addition, VASI created other intimate networking sessions where participants with similar passions and projects came together to discuss their projects, the challenges they face and how they have mitigated them, and what the future looks like for the Kenyan youth.

After a two-day training session for workshop leaders & facilitators, led by Ms. Alice Warigia Hinga, VASI sponsored a five-day workshop from August 20th -25th on the role of Kenyan youth in ensuring a peaceful general election and transition. With the country hugely divided along tribal and religious lines, the workshop engaged approximately 400 participants on deep conversations on how they can prevent Kenya from going into chaos along these issues. We divided this workshop 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. Also at the center of discussion was how these youth leaders can offer alternative leadership. At the end of the workshop, the participants created community action programs according to their passions. These projects ranged from using sports as a tool for peace to using performing arts as a tool for both peace and generating income. This workshop was led by Benjamin Munyao, Eddy Oketch and Collonius Mukari.

Because each of the 500 conference participants has a grassroots youth following of at least 50 youths, we estimate that the project will effectively reach at least 30,000 Kenya youths. In addition, the peace march held at the conclusion of the conference attracted more than 5,000 marchers.

We encountered some challenges during the project due to the nature of organizing an event from a distance. Some of the organizers and speakers were not able to attend, which created last-minute changes in the programming. In addition we encountered difficulties with our chosen accommodations, and needed to find alternative accommodations at the last moment. Lastly, the peace rally that we had planned to take place after the peace march was cancelled due to concern from the local government that it might incite unrest.

This initiative and those of its partner organizations was aimed at creating a continued inspiration that could sustain the passion and energy of the youth leaders far and beyond the conference. At the end of the conference, all of the participants were commissioned to be national peace ambassadors. The peace ambassadors made a commitment to working in their communities to promote inter-ethnic understanding and defending the Kenyan constitution. The peace ambassadors were given the task of each conducting at least one grassroots youth rally where youth would pledge to honor the Kenyan constitution and reject any acts of violence in the upcoming elections. These rallies are scheduled to take place in the three months leading to the elections and the youth leaders are expected to report on the rallies to a five-member committee on which Benjamin Munyao serves.

The team also came into realization that the most serious issues facing Kenyan youths are unemployment, drug abuse and a lack of opportunities. There is therefore not likely to be peace in Kenya without youths prospering or creating a venue where youths have opportunities. VASI will be exploring future projects that tie together the theme of peace and prosperity, which must co-exist in order to create a peaceful Kenya.

Section II

Peace is not the absence of war but a state where interactions in a community are governed by trust and justice and where everyone knows and respects their rights and responsibilities. It encompasses a community that acknowledges and celebrates diversity and works together towards a shared prosperity. Prior to the project, my team and I were focused on preaching non-violence and steering Kenyan youth into being agents of positive change in their community. However, as we discovered later, this goal could not be achieved without (i.) addressing the root cause of historical injustices and (ii.) creating a framework that not only encourages peace but also actively creates a prosperous community.

We believe our project contributes to peace in the short term by helping Kenya's youth understand the new constitution and making it more possible for Kenya to have a peaceful general election and transition. We believe it will add to peace in the long term by equipping and motivating local youth leaders and groups to actively engage in championing for peace and prosperity in their community.

Youth have vast power to influence the direction their society moves and, with some guidance, they can be key to creating a prosperous society. There is a close link between prosperity and peace; the two co-exist together and any peaceful society is bound to create the foundation for prosperity. This project saw youth leaders from across Kenya make a decision and a commitment to be peace ambassadors, independent thinkers and bearers of their country's destiny. - Benjamin Munyao, Colorado College

B. Photography



Photo 1: A section of facilitators during the 2-day training



Photo 2: 2nd from Right: Keynote Speaker: Dr. PLO Lumumba-Former Director of the Kenya Anti-corruption Commission: Why Youth and Women - Economic Strength and Peaceful Co-existence in Kenya Matters.



Photo 3: A section of Peace Marchers during the peace march in Nakuru

	Items	KSH.	USD
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Exchange rate used	1KSH = 83 USD		
General Expenses	Airfare(Ben from USA to Nairobi)	174,490.90	2,102.30
	Phone airtime(PhoneCards)	10,000.00	120.48
	Misc. Expenses	45,840.00	552.29
Leader Training	Ground Transportation	16,400.00	197.59
	Accommodation	23,800.00	286.75
	Meals	23,440.00	282.41
	Expert Compensation	32,000.00	385.54
Workshop	Space Rental	40,000.00	481.93
	Equipment rental	28,000.00	337.35
	Accommodation	212,000.00	2,554.22
	Food and other utilities	162,000.00	1,951.81
	Transportation	88,200.00	1,062.65
Guest Speaker	Compensation	10,000.00	120.48
Nationwide Campaign	Publications(Fliers, Copies of Constitutions)	63,400.00	763.86
	Contribution for grassroots youth rallies	100,000.00	1,204.82
	Equipment (Campaign Truck, Sound systems)	25,000.00	301.20
<u>Total</u>		<u>1,054,570.90</u>	\$12,705.67