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Words: Daniel Wesangula. **Technical Review:** Bonventure Chengeck. **Graphics:** Benson Wanjau



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he Peace, Security and Stability (PSS) programme was set up by the Danish Government through its embassy in Nairobi to address insecurity caused by political and natural resources conflicts as well as by violent extremism in Kenya. To deal with these critical issues that threaten to hold back the country, certain synergies between government, the public and the non-state sector have remained crucial.

"PSS itself has been running for 5 years but Denmark has been in Kenya in this space for nearly 20 years. Some of the successes of PSS is that it has enabled Denmark to have a role and especially in the area of countering violent extremism," Makena Kirima, the PSS Focal Manager says.

Now, the programme is slowly realizing gains in the spaces that it was meant to effect. Peace has come back to communities that showed animosity to one another. The relationships between the police officers and the youths have been mended and in many parts of the country, the once idle, unemployed youth who looked to violence for sustenance are slowly being empowered economically to take back their lives.

And this economic empowerment has been a key turning point for most young people. A key discovery by the PSS being the link between unemployment and insecurity and how solutions that look simple in providing regular incomes for hundreds of youths across the country can result in a more peaceful coexistence.

20 years

PSS itself has been running for 5 years but Denmark has been in Kenya in this space for nearly 20 years. "We are not just looking at people who want to be engaged. We also look at those who want to start their own businesses with the resources they have locally." Makena says. "For instance in West Pokot, we have youth engaged in bee keeping in a more serious way on an activity that is already their way of life."

On its own, the PSS programme has over the years sought to address the root causes of conflict and violent extremism. Key to this has been the collaboration between communities at risk on one hand and the county and national government officials/ institutions on the other hand; providing young people at risk with positive alternatives to enable them resist the lure of extremist groups; and building capacity of local civil society to mobilize communities against insecurity and violent extrem-

"When youths are empowered issues to do with insecurity are also reduced. When a youth is empowered his mind



Peter Ombati



Otieno Kabisai

will be busy so that he cannot be engaged in other matters. The most important thing is to empower the youth to have something to eat at the end of the day," Peter Obati, the County Human Resource Management Officer in Kisumu says. "If they are not, then they get into drug abuse and violence."

Kisumu County is one of the regional governments that has benefitted from collaborating with organisations implementing the PSS programme. Since inception, local arms of government have seen a noticeable level of reduced crime and other incidences of insecurity.

"Due to our partnership we have been able to achieve so much. And Kisumu is now peaceful," Kisumu's County Commissioner Josephine Ouko says.

But PSS aims not just to impact the lives of the at risk populations but also shift perceptions among policy makers to make them alive to the fact that good policies can be a solid foundation on which the live

of the youth across the country can be set on a good trajectory.

"Through the programme we did with Act as an implementing partner, Members of County Assemblies were receptive to the trainings we initiated," Agostino Neto, a co-convener of the Kenya Parliamentarians Human Rights Commission said.

The Kenya Parliamentarians Human Rights Commission, an association of former and current members of Parliament mandated to influence policy, legislation and advance human rights causes across the country as well as the domesticating international human rights legislation.

"Part of the things we did during our partnership with Act was the women peace security convention for purposes of advancing human rights in the country," Neto says. "In as much as we try to do this on a national scale, we cascade whatever we learn to the counties, making sure the skills obtained at the national level remain relevant at the county level as well."

As a result, Neto's group and other partners such as DANIDA





Due to our partnership we have been able to achieve so much. And Kisumu is now peaceful."

Josephine Ouko

and ACT engage different levels of government including with Members of County Assembly to pass on the importance of being part of and influencing legislative processes within their spheres.

"During our workshops MCAs were exposed to policy trainings for the first time and saw the importance of this in their daily engagements with the electorates," he said. "Now they have an appetite for understanding how they can intervene on various matters from a policy point of view," Neto says.

One of the biggest problems that his team has seen remains the correlation between youth unemployment and crime. To his team, a key intervention, apart from those put forth by other actors remains legislation.

"The youth bulge has a direct correlation to security. The number of unemployed young people in Kenya is alarming. One of the things we have done is propose an employment skills development bill that will match the output at the college level with the market," Neto says.

If the bill sails through the legislative process, Neto says it will match the skill set acquired in institutions of higher learning with the demands of the job market. That's not the only policy intervention that has come out of engagement with Act.

"We have also proposed a social safety net policy that will request the government to pay a social safety grant to unemployed graduates," he says. "With money to deal with basic needs then a youth will sit down and think about how to use the skills they have learnt to better themselves."

The PSS programme is still ongoing but its success is already being felt.

"One of the other successes of PSS is an evaluation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark in 2018 that showed that PSS was already achieving results," Makena Kirimi, the PSS Focal Manager says.



Collaboration as the secret ingredient

he relationship between the youth and law enforcement in Kenya's lake city of Kisumu has always been adversarial. For decades, dialogue was non-existent between these two critical segments of the population and often, simple incidences like the arrest of a young man of the stoning of a police officer would lead to days-long violence in the city.

Youths and law enforcement hardly saw eye to eye and in the grand scheme of things were sworn enemies. With time though, the toxicity of the relationship was detrimental to both sides. The volatility of the city made it almost impossible for business or entrepreneurship to flourish. The trickledown effect of this was a lack of jobs for the budding youth pop-

2016

In 2016 however, a long-term solution was sought through the Peace, Security and Sustainability programme spearheaded by Act Change Transpform and implemented through various partners across the country.

ulation which in turn led to the young men and women engaging in violent crime, beginning yet another cycle of animosity between residents and law enforcement.

In 2016 however, a long-term solution was sought through the Peace, Security and Sustainability programme spearheaded by Act Change Transform and implemented through various partners across the country. In Kisumu, community based organization Pamoja for Transformation took up the key role of trying to bridge the gap between the youths and the law enforcement agencies within Kisumu.

"Youth were readily available to support any cause. It was a big concern for us," Paul Odumbe, the Programme Coordinator for Pamoja for Trans-

formation says.

For Pamoja, the growing number of outlawed groups within Kisumu and the increased involvement of young men and women in crime was of concern. But there lay a bigger problem, the lack of cohesion between the youth and officers of the law.

"We realized that peace and stability cannot be left to government. We have to provide the bridge between government and the people," Odumbe says.

As a result, Pamoja set out to promote coordination between state and non-state actors, and to date, there are tangible results to the work they have put over the past several years.

"Pamoja came into this region after the post election violence and they worked to bring back the youth into a place of peace. We were able to understand the underlying issues in our part and change the narrative," Kisumu County Commissioner Josephine Ouko says. "Youths are no longer looked at as the sources of insecurity in the area. We have understood each other and found common ground."

Due to the partnership between the youths, Pamoja and the national government through the County Commissioner's office, so much has been achieved in the county.

"Kisumu is now peaceful. The youths are receptive, engaging in their own economic activities and the aura in the town has changed. When you see this, it means people have worked to make it this way. The government, civil society as well as faith based organsisations," Ms Ouko says.

She says the impact of the interventions that were initiated were so far reaching that even the loss of jobs and livelihoods brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have not been able to undo the work done over the years.

"We have been able to do a lot of capacity building among





We realized that peace and stability cannot be left to government. We have to provide a bridge between the government and the people."

Paul Odumbe

the youth. We have developed in them the technical knowhow, and empowered them to handle problems among themselves. There has been a lot of intervention even from the community itself."

The interventions that the County Commissioner talks about spoke to the heart of the problems that existed. First, policemen were taken through various trainings that made them understand the issues that the youths in the region were going through.

They were from the very beginning introduced to the challenges that the young population of Kisumu was going through and most importantly how to engage with them.

"Through trainings we have come to understand that the youth only needed a livelihood to get transformed. We had not tapped into their talents before but now we have," Ms Ouko says.

In conjunction with partners such as Pamoja, the county government holds life skills sessions most weekdays between 7AM and 8AM. "We get experts to talk to them about HIV/ AIDS, cancer as well as entrepreneurship," she says.

The involvement of state agencies has not just been limited to the county commissioner's office. Involvement and sensitization of the importance of synergy between youth and state officials has also been taken to the grassroot.

Senior Chief for West Koloa Location, Otieno Kabisai was there when Kisumu was going through one of its worst periods.

"Back then, things were very different," he says of a time when Kisumu was steeped in crime. "There was a time when thugs could burst into your house, force themselves in, assault you and then rob you of whatever valuables you had. This is not taking place anymore." He attributes part of this success not just to the economic empowerment of the young men, but also to how the public relates with local administration.

"We have attended workshops with Pamoja to build our capacity which is key to the work we are doing," the senior chief says. "They have educated us on the rights of our citizens and have tried to make sure that the lines of communication between us and those we have been told to govern are always open," Mr Kabisai says.

Although initial engagement has been successful, there is more that needs to be done.

"We need to start engaging now to build our early warning mechanisms and systems. We have unresolved issues that need to be dealt with which can trigger conflict," Ouko, the County Commissioner says. We need you today so that we can build capacities before elections. We have to start this long journey now."

For now, though, a cloud of peace has settled over Kisumu. The hard work of keeping it there has just begun.

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Engaging youth in meaningful businesses

as a way of keeping them away from crime



he two years that followed the death of her husband, Isabel Akinyi Opondo found herself slowly drifting away from the things that she held dear. For that brief period in her life, family, friends and the virtues of hard work that she had lived with throughout her entire life seemed to stop to matter.

Curveballs that life threw her way were slowly steering her towards a direction that she wasn't sure she would return from.

"After my husband died, I faced some struggles in bringing up my children," Isabel says. "He was the sole bread winner. For months I couldn't feed my children or take them to school."

As a widow in Kisumu, a County in Western Kenya steeped in tradition, she was forced to ask for handouts from her in laws. She would go to them from the most basic of needs to the most complicated. This though was

Sh3.2m

Loans of up to Sh3.2million have given out

200

 Our engagement with Pamoja for Transformation has been to compliment, empower and train more than 200 youths not sustainable.

After some time, the relatives got tired of her asking for help all the time.

But there were options around her.

Kisumu city has for decades been regarded as a volatile area and in 2007 faced some of the worst violence following a crisis brought about by disputed presidential polls that year. Since then, unemployed men and women have in their desperation been hirlings for politicians or formed rich fodder for gang recruitment.

For them, belonging to gangs and acting as political hirelings for the vocal political class provided quick money for the thousands of youths in the region. At one point, after struggling to pay her daughter's school fees,

these are the options that crossed Isabel's mind. At the time, they seemed better than watching her children stay out of school. Or worse, sleep hungry.

Fate though had other plans. And a combination of luck, and an ongoing economic empowerment programme by a community based organization steered her away from this path. And it all began with her eavesdropping on a conversation.

"I overheard friends of mine talking about a training on entrepreneurship," she says. At the time, she had tried her hand at an array of businesses but none was successful. From selling food to dealing in charcoal. They all ended up in loss.

"So I applied for the training programme and my life has never been the same since," she says.

The conversation she overheard was about an entrepreneurship boot camp by Pamoja For Transformation: an organization that trains, coaches and connects youth, women and men to solve problems in their communities related to violence and security.

"Our engagement was in three main areas," Paul Odumbe, the Programme Coordinator at Pamoja for Transformation says.

"One of our key goals is to build community resilience and boost their socio- economic status. This improves their livelihoods and thus deters them from engaging in violence for sustenance," Odumbe says.

Through this programme, Isabel went through a month long training that showed her the steps she needed to take to run a sustainable business.



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We have seen these young people set up businesses, group projects and earn income. This means they are not dependent on crime to get money,"

Maurice Otieno

"There were many things I didn't know," she says. "One of them was how to diversify my business and ensure it remains profitable."

Now her grocery shop is one of the best stocked in her neighourhood. Although it is a modest structure, she does not shy away from stocking the things that her customers need. Sachets of cooking fat can be seen from the mesh window that lest in just enough sunlight for one to see the shelves further back

Plastic transparent containers with grains invite one to the richness promised by the store. Packets of sugar here. Diapers and wheat flour to make up for the stock. She has also successfully learnt the art of diversification.

Right outside her shop is a homemade boiler that contains eggs. "I want my customers to get everything that they want here," she says.

Isabel is not the only success story. Many more too have opted for business in place of violence after receiving training by Pamoja for Transformation in partnership with other key agencies.

"Our engagement with Pamoja for Transformation has been to compliment and empower and train more than 200 youths," Maurice Otieno Ondiek, the Head of Enterprise Development at the Youth Enterprise Development Fund says.

According to Ondiek, 10 youth groups in the region have been empowered to start their business not just through training but through financing as well.

"We have given out loans of up to Sh3.2million," Ondiek says. "Once the youth are in gainful employment they tend to move away from social vices like crime and other evils like joining gangs."

The businesses, he says, make the youth financially independent and empowered enough not to be influenced towards bad behavior.

"We have seen these young people set up businesses, group projects and earn income. This means they are not dependent on crime to get money." he says.

Pamoja Transformation (PFT) is one of the organisations that benefitted from the Peace Security and Stability Project spearheaded by Act Change Transform (Act!). The project which has been running since 2016 emphasizes the prevention of different forms of violence within Kisumu, including the use of entrepreneurship as a means of deterring youth from engaging in crime and violent activities.



Stitching Isiolo youth together for peace

oung people in Kenya today live in complex and challenging times. The political and social turmoil of the 1990s left scars that today are being borne disproportionately by young people.

For them, surviving the turmoil created by previous

generations means crime. It means not caring about tomorrow. It means being easily swayed by the intentions of an aspiring politician.

However, the silver lining is that an increasingly large number of them and those in belief of their untapped potential are charting a differ-

ent path.

"We have everything within reach. If I stretch out my hand I can touch crime or peace. I chose peace. That is what we try to tell those who watch our plays. Ultimately the choice is yours," Halima Adan says, changing fabrics on her sewing machine



We realised there was a gap between the skill acquisition and the actual running of their businesses. That is why we decided to take them through basic book keeping courses to give them that added advantage when they venture out on their own,"

Sammy Kariuki

during a tailoring class in Isiolo Town.

Halima is one of the dozens of young men and women engaged by the Nomadic Women for Sustainable Development (NOWSUD) for skills building in different in tailoring, business classes and leather sandals making.

In Isiolo County, Act Change Transform (Act!) continues to support NOWSUD to create opportunities for thousands who have failed to secure employment in the formal sector.

Unemployed youth in Isiolo have become easy targets for recruitment into violent extremist groups, often riding the promise of monetary gain.

The NOWSUD center is imparting skills in tailoring, shoe making, embroidery and computer literacy to the dozens of youth who go through its doors every day.

"We just help them be creative and innovative. This way they can address unemployment and underemployment," Sammy Kariuki, the Program Manager at NOWSUD says.

"Here we are all about teaching them how to fish. We want them to be self-reliant," he says.

The youth from diverse backgrounds are trained on various life skills such as leather works and tailoring. From learning to make sandals to making cloths, dozens of young men and women have been empowered with a life skill that enables them earn a living in an honest way.

"I do not know where I would be without this training," Halima Adan says. She is among 15 women of diverse ages that is ungdergoing a tailoring class at the NOWSUD centre.

"I have a skill that I can fall back to," she says. "When this is done I hope to start my own business."

While participants are engaged in hands-on training in the skills they prefer, NOWSUD also takes them through financial literacy classes that they hope will help the beneficiaries get skills that they can use to diligently manage the businesses they start in future.

"We realised there was a gap between the skill acquisition and the actual running of their businesses. That is why we decided to take them through basic book keeping courses to give them that added advantage when they venture out on their own," Kariuki says.

The impact of the programme has already been felt with community leaders, elders and state officials acknowledging a reduction in violent incidences as a result of such interventions.

More however needs to be done.

"The programme needs to be scaled further," Kariuki says. "We need to reach more youths and engage many more in activities that will help them be financially independent."

For NOWSUD, this intervention will be key in keeping the peace in Isiolo not just for now, but for years to come.



ilifi County is famed for having some of the world's best beach destinations. From Watamu to Malindi, few other destinations could match the white sandy beaches that hug the county to its south. But underneath these, underneath the soothing waves and calming breeze a battle for Kilifi's soul has been raging.

For years, political violence, radicalization and violent extremism has made inroads into the county often resulting in bloody violence that has lead not just to destruction of property but to loss of livelihoods and lives.

As a result tourist numbers, key to the survival of the county, fell and households were plunged into the embrace of poverty that was to later push the county's youth, men and women into the hands of violent extremism and crime which at the time looked to be the better



Haron Mwatua

option.

But when this went on though, a group of residents thought it prudent to do something about the detrimental losses that faced the county. Kilifi was slowly gaining the reputation of being among the 'Hot Spot' counties- counties that were perceived to be tethering on the brink of violence and would require the smallest of embers to burst into flames. Residents were concerned.

One of them was Haron Mwatua.

Mwatua likes dressing in colourful shirts and speaks with the voice of someone who has seen more than his fair share of life. His head is clean shaven. His eyes are piercing, looking straight into your s when talking.

"After the 2007 post-election violence we decided to form a Peace Committee," Mwatua who also serves as the Peace Committee Chairman in Kilifi says. "We were brought together by the government and told of the importance of peace and why we should have a committee that will go across the county to look into matters peace."

The peace committee is a collection of government officers and respected members of the society who have been tasked to be the holders of peace in Kilifi. They solve disputes within communities and help identify thorny issues that might need the intervention of government. The committees also serve as

a bridge between communities and the state.

Key to Mwatua's work has been the role that non-governmental organizations have played in making sure they are all well-equipped to continue preaching peace within the county. One of the organsiations that has played a marked role is the Kenya Community Support Centre (KECOSCE).

As an organization, KECO-SCE aims to promote and facilitate institutionalization of the values and practices of good governance at all levels of society as a basis for sustainable social-economic development. To achieve this, peace is imperative.

"Our main program has been peace building and countering violent extremism," Hassan Kibwana, Programmes Coordinator at KE-COSCE says. "Through the partnership with ACT and the Danish Embassy we were able to implement the Peace Security Sustainability (PSS) programe."

Kibwana says that the PSS programme needed KECO-SCE to work very closely with the local and county peace structures.

"We have worked very closely with the county government to lobby the county to come up with a strategy that will enable them to be part and parcel of resolving the issues affecting the county," Kibwana says.

As a result, the diligence of the Peace Committee with the support of KECOSCE has resulted in Kilifi County adopting a County Action Plan on Peace that has become key in the response and address of insecurity matters within the county.



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We have worked very closely with the county government to lobby the county to come up with a strategy that will enable them to be part and parcel of resolving the issues affecting the county."

Hassan Kibwana

"We came up with a draft policy addressing some of the issues affecting this county. The draft was passed at the county cabinet level and adopted as the County Action Plan," Kibwana says.

And now, from the capacity building that county assembly staff and legislators received from KECOSCE, conversations have already started on something much bigger than an action plan.

"The collaboration between different players in the county n terms of resolving issues affecting the county led to the process of coming up with a Peace Bill. If we get more resources we can go a long way with this," Kibwana says.

And just like the County

Action Plan, Kilifi's Peace Bill will not only be for the people, it will also be by the people.

"Kilifi's peace process has always been community driven and supported by KECOSCE since 2018," Agneta Karembo, Kilifi County's Gender, Culture, Sports and Social Services officer says. "The process has involved everyone concerned on matters of peace. From the family to the society around it."

Karembo says that religious leaders, youth, women groups, government officers as well as community based organizations were all part of the formulation of the action plan. More importantly too, she says that they shall continue to be part of all efforts to bring peace to the county even if it means going against long held traditional practices such as the inclusion of women in crucial conversations.

"The community has now learnt the importance of women being members of the peace committee," Asha Said, a Kilifi resident and member of Kilifi County's peace committee says. "Before it was the men who sat in these committees but women soon joined and we have shown patience and humility in dealing with matters before the committee."

It is through these interventions that Kilifi is slowly returning to normal.

"We appreciate the partnership that is there between state and non-state actors when it comes to peace building, conflict resolutions and matters security within the county," Joseph Mutisya, Kilifi County's Deputy County Commissioner says.



In West Pokot, there's more to the bees than a sting

rowing up, Richard Bogon learnt that there was only one way that a man could earn a living. Not through hard work. Neither was it through education. In Tikit Village, where he was born and bred, the option was limited to the use of a gun, or an equivalent of it to acquire wealth.

For him and his peers, the option was limited to attacking neighbouring communities and getting away with whatever they could land their hands on. Often, this resulted injury and even death. Young men would go out to raid other communities and steal their cattle, but almost always. some of them would not return, leaving mourning mothers and sad wives behind.

'We would use any weapon

The Tikit valleys form some painters.

Underneath the beauty of the hills and valleys lie stories of decades of intercommunal fighting that has resulted in life long grudges. Grudges that Richard and his age mates are now trying to fight and create a better future not just for them but for those who will come after them as well.

With the support of the Af-

to get money," he says.

of the most beautiful landscapes that Kenya has ever seen. Undulating valleys only interrupted by green hills that rise to the skies would form the perfect model for canvas

"Since 2019, we have opted for another route," Richard says. "The paths followed by our fathers are no longer for us."

has over the years seen an increase in membership. Loloto is one of the community led organisations that have benefitted from interventions by the Peace Stability and Security programme by Act and the Danish Embassy. Through Loloto, the youth

were able to identify that the absence of an economic activity was key in pushing them towards a life of violence. If, according to them, they were to get an economic activity that would help them earn a living, then shedding a life of violence would be much easier.

The group was initially made up of 60 members but

In 2019, Loloto, with the help of African Rangelands did a proposal to the Danish embassy through Act. The proposal detailed how a stable economic activity for the village's youthful population would go a long way in promoting peace in the region.

"The proposal was successful and we got some beehives which we set up in different places in the county," Richard says.

The group got some 120 bee hives that have benefited 30 members of the group. meaning that each member owns some 4 beehives.

Records from the group show that each member gets around Sh4000 from every hive during harvesting season, meaning that each one of them gets some Sh16000 shillings every harvesting season.

Before the beehives came. West Pokot was not devoid of peace interventions.

"The PSS programme beter and pasture," David Yego,





The main challenge we face is water. During the dry season the bees move away and look for water. When the bees move hey hardly ever come back to the hives."

Richard Bogon

African Rangelands Project Officer says. "We need to do something different from the normal dialogue."

Yego says his organisation then decided to engage act to bring on board West Pokot's vouth on a bee keeping initiative that had the potential of positively affecting the lives of 240 youths.

"We wanted the youth to increase their purchasing power through selling honey," Yego says. "The initiative has enabled conversations to start within the three communities that hadn't sat down in dialogue since 1992."

The success of the beekeeping project has brought with it some challenges too.

The first one being insufficient hives to engage the numerous youth interested in ditching old habits for the more profitable honey busi-

"We want to engage more vouth but we do not have enough bee hives. We hope





We employed interethnic dialogue program whereby we managed to engage the three communities and out of that they were able to speak to each other."

David Yego

that we shall get more help. This will reduce incidents of cattle rustling," Richard says. "Only 30 of our members got hives. We hope that the remaining 30 will also get them."

Yego says the bee keeping program has improved dialogue between the communities, some of whom had not engaged each other for decades.

"We want this initiative to be up scaled because this can transform them," he says.

Loloto Group makes around Sh500,000 per sea-

"This program has enabled people take children to school and get them off cattle rustling, early marriages, child labour and other forms of delinquency," Yego says. "We remain grateful to the ACT team and the Danish Embassy and we request that this programme continues so that we transform these communities for good."

the Danish Embassy, Richard gan back in 2017 when there formed Loloto Group, a cluster was a need to engage the of voung men from West Pokot three conflicting communiwith ambitions that transcend ness. ties of Pokot, Turkana and the violence that they grew up Marakwet who have been in and a hope that points to a fighting for decades over wamore peaceful future.

Number of youth

in Loloto Group.

Number of beehives

they benefited from.

Number of youth targeted

by Loloto group.

■ The year PSS programme

started in West Pokot.

rican Rangelands, Act and





Kimisitu House, Woodlands Road Opposite International Federation for Redcross & Red Cresent (IFRC), P. O. Box 76390-00508 Nairobi, Kenya Direct Line: +254 701 698 263 Cell: +254 722 203 721 www.act.or.ke



@tendasasa



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