



Project background

In December 2007 Kenyans held parliamentary and presidential elections. Subsequent to the announcement of the disputed Presidential results, sporadic violence broke out in many parts of the country. Tension was high in most parts of the country characterised by violence, looting, burning of houses and incidences of rape. The climax of the tensions went on for several months in 2008 and also took an ethnic dimension. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands displaced. Injuries and deaths caused by gunshots, arrows, spears and machetes used during the skirmishes increased and the capability of health facilities to respond was significantly reduced. Many people were traumatised physically and psychosocially. There was loss of livelihoods and access to services. Transport services and economic activities were disrupted and this led to scarcity of both relief and commercial goods. The violence, with its

Project strategy and objectives

The prevailing situation in the country at that time called for a quick and radical response. The Neighbourhood Volunteer Scheme was thus initiated by UNDP, UNV and the Government of Kenya to tone down the violence and support delivery of services through supplementing of human resource capacities. The project/scheme was officially launched in Nairobi on 5th March, 2008.

The scheme envisaged to cover 21 districts that were epicentres of violence following the elections. The scheme taps on the inherent resources and capacity of the people within the community ranging from youth leaders, retired professionals and community opinion leaders to bring a turnaround effect on tensions caused in the post election. Community members are engaged as volunteers and through training and sensitisation, are charged with the responsibilities of promoting and guiding the processes for self healing, harnessing reconciliation, peace building and recovery within the neighbourhoods. Anchoring on volunteerism presented a distinctive contribution to facilitate inclusion and participation of stakeholders starting from the neighbourhood level to the upper levels. The neighbourhood volunteers are identified by the District Commissioners while the UNV Office in collaboration with the National Secretariat for Peace Building and Conflict Management of the President's Office is responsible for training. The UNV office also has the role of overall project management oversight.

The volunteers were trained and oriented on a range of topics in order to strengthen their capacity to contribute to the existing and emerging mechanisms of harnessing the community towards reconciliation, peace building, recovery and revitalising the ethos of nationhood. The training contents includes modules and topics such as peace and reconciliation, humanitarian service, basic counselling / psycho-social support, volunteerism, nationhood and nation building, understanding of conflict, early warning systems and response, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, wealth creation and youth issues, advocacy, facilitation skills and planning. A cascade approach of training was adopted whereby a core team of trained trainers trained the neighbourhood volunteers and subsequently, the volunteers are conducting training and sensitization within their respective neighbourhoods. As the scheme continues to roll out, a continuous training approach has been adopted to further enhance the volunteer's skills and enable them to serve their communities. On demand arrangement training has been done in areas such as: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; First Aid basics; cross cultural management and relationships; leaderships skills; proposal writing etc.



Trainers at one of the sessions during the training of trainers workshop held in Nakuru

The scheme is embedded in the local governance institutions. The entry point at the district level is the office of the District Commissioner (DC) with the intent of building the capacity of the office to foster a peaceful environment and offer more effectively coordinated support for peace, reconciliation, humanitarian support and early recovery. In this regard NUNV District Coordinators have been engaged and are based in the DC's office to support the coordination and capacity building for the enhancement of delivery for peace and development within the District.



Neighbourhood Volunteers from Kwanza District in Kenya's Rift Valley Province raise their hands as they take the volunteers pledge and commitment. They are required to take a pledge to exercise with dedication, discretion and conscience, the duties which shall be entrusted to them as they work for peace, reconciliation and development

The overall objectives of the project are to:

- i. Engage neighbourhood volunteers through orientation and training, instill a sense of responsibility and equip them with necessary tools to initiate reconciliation amongst their affected neighbourhoods
- ii. Harness positive attitude in the neighbourhood to enable reconciliation and the recovery process
- iii. Supplement human resource capacity for responding to post election crisis
- iv. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of NVS so as to inform national level strategies for conflict resolution peace building early recovery and service delivery through volunteer action

Project progress

In the process of fulfilling the project objectives, the following progress has been made:

- i. Funding for the project for 14 district out of 21 districts was successfully mobilized from UNDP (US\$955,110), Peace Building Fund (US \$1,000,000) and UNV /Special Voluntary Fund (US\$800,000);
- ii. Developed a 12 module Resource Training Guide for trainers and neighbourhood volunteers¹;
- iii. Recruited, oriented and trained 210 trainers, 928 neighborhood volunteers; 19 District Coordinators and 30 media practitioners;
- iv. Volunteers in 11 districts have commenced work around three thematic areas – conflict resolution and peace building, counseling, humanitarian response and early recovery;
- v. The project team at the UNV unit has been put in place; and
- vi. Project equipment and logistical support to assist in documentation, monitoring and coordination of the project was procured for 21 districts. This included computers for District Coordinators and identification gear for the neighborhood volunteers i.e. Jackets and identification card.

The project has been launched in eleven (11) districts out of the 21 that are targeted; the process of the launch also includes a commitment ceremony for the neighbourhood volunteers. The districts are located in Nairobi, Rift Valley, Coast, and Nyanza provinces. In the remaining 10 districts training of neighbourhood volunteers has been undertaken. Overall, 928 Neighbourhood Volunteers have been mobilised and trained to work in areas most affected by post election violence.

In Nakuru District for example 51 Neighbourhood Volunteers were recruited in August 2008. The volunteers are from two neighbourhoods (Kaptembwa and Baruti) which were the most affected by the violence. The volunteer have been working around three thematic areas:

- i) Conflict resolution and peace building,
- ii) Counselling and
- iii) Humanitarian response and early recovery.

Youth have been sensitized to participate in peace initiatives such as sports activities to promote peace and reconciliation. This intervention is important because the vulnerability of the youth exposed them to political manipulation and used as perpetrators of violence, which exposed them to being victims of the same violence in Nakuru.

¹ Training modules include: volunteer action, nationhood and nation building, counselling, self-awareness and anger management, advocacy, conflict analysis and peace building, conflict early warning mechanism, humanitarian assistance and early recovery, handling of trauma and counselling, proliferation of small/crude arms, youth empowerment and wealth creation and human rights with emphasis on gender perspectives.



Those displaced by the violence congregated and formed camps of Internally Displaced Persons. The volunteers have been mobilizing and assisting in the distribution of essential life-saving requirements including food, water and sanitation. As a result most camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nakuru have been closed and the people resettled and an IDP Information Centre established to assist them.

On a continuous basis the neighborhood volunteers are assisting in reintegration of IDPs who went back to the community after the camps were closed. The volunteers offer counseling/psycho-social support to traumatized persons and where applicable referrals to specialists have been made. They have assisted in distributing of building materials to those whose houses were burnt down during violence. As well as offering an additional hand in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of buildings.

Several areas that were adversely affected by violence are in cosmopolitan town that thrive on business and agriculture, most businesses in the affected areas have re-opened and small business premises that were burned down have been reconstructed with the assistance of volunteers and funding from other community based organizations.



Neighbourhood Volunteer Monica Dudi speaks to mothers of Newly born babies at Teldet IDP Camp in Trans Nzoia West District



Ms Anna Chebet, NVS District Coordinator Sotik District addresses a peace baraza at Gelegele Location

The volunteers have initiated public forums where the community can dialogue on issues affecting them and learn how to resolve conflict in a peaceful manner. The forums have also given people an opportunity to share experiences and give emphasis on the need for them to put their tribal and political differences aside so that peace can prevail. The neighbourhood volunteers there are now working towards changing attitudes of people to up hold the culture of peaceful co existence despite ideological diversities that exist

Over time the approach of the neighbourhood volunteer scheme has been proven to be practical and effective in dealing with peace building and reconciliation to the extent that government officials have commended its success. For example, the role played by the trained neighbourhood volunteers in:

- i) Containing potential conflict-flare-up in Nairobi West District – Kibera settlement during the build-up for the local council elections in July 2008;
- ii) Mediating peaceful coexistence between tenants and landlords in Nairobi North District – Mathare North settlement and Nairobi East –Dandora settlement
- iii) Successfully preparing ground for the return of IDPs in Burnt Forest through community dialogue.

The diversity and richness in the skills of the neighbourhood volunteers has greatly supported the project in developing and implementing practical advocacy interventions. In Eldoret East district two neighbourhood volunteers i.e. a comedian and a singer have greatly enriched the advocacy for peace reconciliation and volunteerism. The comedian has performed in meetings organised by the neighbourhood volunteers as well as the district administration; by reciting peace poems and delivering comedy on issues that affect the area as well as encouraging leaders to forge unity and orient their public speeches towards healing and reconciliation.



Ms Flora Bwuzu

The singer Ms Flora Bwuzu, a Neighbourhood Volunteer in Eldoret East, has composed a theme song titled *Amani* (Peace) for the Neighbourhood Volunteers Scheme which she performs at peace meetings. The song has been produced and is being utilised to polarise peace messages all over the country.



Challenges

Meeting the growing demand to extend the scheme to more districts and neighbourhoods:

As a result, of the positive experiences of the scheme government ministries, in particular the Ministry of State for Special Programmes was interested in replicating community reconciliation dialogue as well as volunteer nature of response to other parts of the country that were greatly affected by the crisis i.e. 21 Districts. Although the structures and implementation arrangements for rolling out to an additional 7 districts were prepared the funding for these districts did not come through as had been anticipated

Further, in Nairobi for example, the implementation of the scheme in three districts was extended for an additional 3 months to 4 more neighbourhoods. The District Commissioners were of the view that there was need to extend the duration of the project as well as reach more neighbourhoods so as to further mitigate the effects of the violence and consolidate the gains that have been made so far. Several District Commissioners expressed the opinion that the 3-months project implementation in a given neighbourhood was too short to bear the desired effect or impact because peace building is a gradual process.

Tackling challenges beyond the project scope

In many parts of Rift Valley such as Nakuru and Eldoret East Districts, triggers of violence like land, unemployment and inequitable distribution of national resources have not yet been solved. Such factors have led to persistent tensions that can easily explode into fully fledged conflicts.

Ability to respond to some of the immediate needs of the community

Although the project has been innovative in supporting and embracing methodologies for peace and reconciliation such as organising peace days, cultural shows, football tournaments, traditional cleansing ceremonies etc The activities should be consolidated by responding to the community's immediate needs, with focus on early peace dividends that enable communities to quickly return to normalcy e.g. helping communities in rebuilding public facilities that were destroyed such as markets, government offices (e.g. for the chiefs) etc. The project lacks a funding component to respond to these needs.

Conclusion

A Project Technical Team (PTT) meeting of the Neighbourhood Volunteer Scheme was held in November 2008. Observation was made that commendable progress in promoting peace and reconciliation, mobilising community for participation as well as building capacity in the community for the mitigation of conflict and dealing with early warning signs of conflict had been made however challenges are still being experienced in dealing with the structural related causes of conflict such as: land, unemployment and inequitable distribution of national resources. Further, dissemination of the recommendation of the Peace Accord has not adequately reached the lower level communities.

A Project Steering Team (PST) meeting was held in February 2009. The meeting recommended that the NVS Project Document be re-designed. The objective of the re-design is to strengthen the projects sustainability and linkages with other actors. Consequently, project activities in the districts where the project has been launched will continue to their logical conclusion while the new project design is being crafted. Following this new development, project launches in Mombasa, Lugari, Molo, Mt Elgon, Kakamega Central, Naivasha, Kericho, Kipkelion, Koibatek and Marakwet will not take place until the redesign process is completed on 31 July 2009. The Project document defines the objectives and scope of the project and forms the basis for its management and the assessment of overall success.