

**Strengthening Youth Resilience to Violence through Sustained Dialogue
A Case Study: “Tubonge Mtaani” in Kamukunji and Mathare Sub-Counties**

1. Abstract

The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) implemented a Sustained Dialogue (SD) project in 2016 in Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties of Nairobi. 170 youth were brought together in dialogue groups across identity lines over a period of seven months, with the aim to strengthen their resilience to violence by improving their relationships, and strengthening their abilities to voice their grievances non-violently.

Based on a case study methodology, and building on learnings from the field work with communities, this paper will explore the relevance, effectiveness and main challenges of the SD project in contributing to sustainable peace in Kenya.

LPI has traditionally supported SD processes in universities within small operational spaces, in Ethiopia and Sudan. In Kenya, prior to engaging, LPI analysed key dynamics and stakeholders in the area, through a pilot research. The analysis emphasized that diverse communities have been experiencing increasing tensions within and between Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties. The research put emphasis on the role urban youth can play in fostering sustainable peace in their communities. SD was implemented as an innovative peacebuilding approach where youth took the lead to voice and address their most pressing challenges. This was LPI’s first time to experiment SD in an urban setting.

At the end of the first round of dialogue, LPI analysed the process to draw lessons for future action. The project’s end-line study highlighted opportunities and challenges, while also informing on the positive changes the SD project has effected among the youth and the broader communities.

2. Introduction

Brief Context Analysis

Whereas Kenya is considered a stable and fast developing country, it remains prone to recurring intra and inter-communal tensions, along ethnic and religious lines.

Strained relations within and between communities are manifest and can escalate to polarisation, including open conflicts during election periods, with Kenya being characterised by intense politicization along ethnic divisions. Election-related violence has in the past been triggered by multiple factors, including the perception that elections have been rigged in favour of one identity group over the other-s (Dercon and Gutierrez-Romero, 2010), and finds a breeding ground in a context characterised by low levels of trust and competition over access to power between diverse groups.

Inter-community relationships have also been influenced, if not shaped, by the emergence of violence from, and in reaction to, extreme interpretations of Islam and the use of violence by armed groups to further these interpretations across the Horn. Kenyan State approaches to (in)security, in a context where violent extremism and terrorism are flagged as a priority, have increasingly tended to stigmatise Muslim communities through profiling, harassment and other abusive practices (Villa-

Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke, Humphrey, 2016). These dynamics have contributed to trigger and fuel tensions between ethno-religious groups. Revisionist processes (revisiting History) are even observed with the current dominant narrative in Kenya being that the relationship between Christians and Muslims – although rarely a violent conflict – has been characterised by a longstanding conflict, bolstered by fierce competition for symbolic power and access to resources, thereby weakening the social fabric in the country (Brislen, 2015).

Diverse and densely-populated, Nairobi’s urban settlements represent microcosms of the wider Kenya in that they reflect the political, socio-cultural and religious dynamics observed across the country. Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties constitute instructive case studies for exploring the interplay between peaceful communal coexistence and drivers of violence. Based on this rationale, the LPI – an international peacebuilding organisation – undertook a pilot research in 2015 in the neighbourhoods of Eastleigh, Majengo and Mlango Kubwa to explore dynamics on the ground, and design a relevant peacebuilding strategy in these areas. Through a participatory action research (PAR) process, LPI’s Kenya programme and its partner the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Eastleigh (CCMRE) gave space to the communities to shed light on, and articulate what they consider as the main challenges to peaceful coexistence at the local level. The reported challenges were then clustered into three groups: socio-economic challenges; governance-related challenges; and radicalisation and violent extremism (Life & Peace Institute, 2016).

In 2017 Kenya, intra and inter-community relations appear marred by heightened suspicion and polarisation, with the potential to escalate to open violent conflicts. Local, national and regional political and security dynamics have tended to reinforce dividers across communities and weaken prospects for positive sustainable peace in the country. Whilst in the wake of the outbreak of violence following the 2007/8 general election, international and national peacebuilding programmes have been at the forefront of preventing a renewed eruption of violence in Kenya, most of the implemented projects have had short-term goals related to preventing electoral violence, over long-term sustainable change in the country that focuses on attitude and behaviours within and between community groups, as is the case with the SD project.

Based on these contextual observations and lessons learned, LPI’s Kenya programme has aimed to contribute to building sustainable peace in the country through strengthening community resilience to dividers. The programme has focused on (re)building relations of understanding, cultivating a culture of trust and collaboration between diverse – and sometimes adversary - social groups, through diverse methodologies. It has also combined this community-based work with issue-based policy engagement toward more conflict-sensitive approaches among political and security authorities, and knowledge generation to inform peacebuilding research.

The Life & Peace Institute’s Innovative Engagement for Peace in Nairobi

Under this programme, in 2016 LPI and its partner Eastleighwood Youth Forum (EYF), with the support of the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) and the Swedish Mission Council (SMC), implemented the first phase of the “Tubonge Mtaani” meaning ‘let’s talk in our communities’ project, based on the SD methodology.

The overall goal of the project has been to enhance the capacity of youth participating in SD processes in Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties, to be (positive) change agents in their communities. The project adopted SD as a dialogue-to-action methodology that promotes inclusion, equal participation and collaboration of diverse youth (in terms of geographical background, ethnic, religious, gender and socio-economic identities) in a sustainable manner.

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150 diverse young men and women from the three neighbourhoods of Eastleigh, Majengo and Mlango Kubwa, met twice a month for constructive discussions on issues that affect them and contribute to divisions, and collaboratively developed three peace and coexistence-promoting actions to address these issues in their broader communities. Targeted groups were accompanied in a seven-month-long dialogue-to-action process to develop greater mutual understanding and trust, and nurture their confidence and ability to voice their needs non-violently, as well as to come up with joint initiatives. LPI and its partner provided the youth with a continuous safe space *“to support a process of self-reflection, to strengthen the capacity for empathy, to awaken the creative potential for imagining a new reality and to empower non-violent strategies, through a dialogue”* with diverse social groups (Graf, Kramer, Nicolescou, 2006, p.63).

By doing so, the SD project aimed to strengthen the participants’ resilience to internal and external catalysts of violence, and hence reinforce cohesion at the local level.

Sustained Dialogue: An Organic Relationship-Building Process

SD is an approach proposed and applied by the US diplomat, international negotiator and peacemaker, the late Dr. Harold H Saunders, a key drafter of the Camp David Peace Accords, as a conflict resolution tool.

For protracted conflicts to be resolved, Saunders stresses the need to build and strengthen relationships at the individual level, as this will create a conducive environment for improved relationships between adversary communities (Kriesberg, 2006). Relationships involve *“invisible, yet powerful, moving in the ‘space between’ individuals and groups”* (Til, 2007, p.369) and are considered as being at the core of peaceful coexistence. To build and improve relationships between adversary parties (i.e. (re)build constructive and collaborative, non-violent, peaceful and trust-based relationships), Saunders suggests that a dialogue that is sustained over a period of time is likely to influence a positive change. When dialogue is sustained, participants will indeed position themselves in a safe and neutral space where they can progressively develop intergroup competencies, including listening carefully to others, identifying and naming their realities, and start showing sympathy to others with a different opinion/view from theirs (Saunders, 2011).

Saunders emphasizes five components, i.e. ‘identity, interests, power, perceptions, and patterns of interaction’ (Kriesberg, 2006 p.48, Saunders, 2011, p.369), that shape and determine the quality of the relationships. The SD process guides participants through a reflection and reciprocal effort on the five components.

Saunders describes the various stages that SD takes, and notes that the dialogue begins when participants are able to identify their issues. This initial stage forms the critical basis of deciding on how to address and tackle the conflict issues (Saunders, 1987). It involves a facilitated, structured and sustained face-to-face meeting between groups of different identities. The participants engage in active listening and sharing of experiences, learn about others’ perspectives and reflect on their views. The method seeks to transform violent conflicts into constructive relationships, especially among groups that have been engaged in protracted deep-rooted conflicts. SD *“stresses the recognition that we are all socialized into systems of power, privilege, and oppression, and the purpose of dialogue is not to blame, but to hold each other responsible for combating myths and developing new ways of understanding socially just relationships as well as social action”* (Dessel & Ali, 2012, p. 129).

Saunders reflects on SD as an organic process of (re)building positive relationships, which is forged around five successive stages. During the first stage – WHO – people come together and decide to engage; during the second stage – WHAT – dialogue participants exchange experiences as a preliminary step in identifying their problems; during the third stage – WHY – dialogue participants qualify and analyse their problems, in order to jointly agree on a direction for change (“the new reality”). The fourth stage – HOW – hosts a scenario-building process with dialogue participants brainstorming around relevant and non-violent problem-solving actions. During the fifth stage – NOW – participants act together and implement their action-s among larger groups (Parker, 2006). This process allows people to engage in social change and tap their capacity that is often left untapped, as Saunders states, *“The capacities and energies of these citizens are the world’s greatest untapped resource in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century”* (Saunders, 2005 p. 1).

Research Questions and Underlying Assumptions

The purpose of this article is to assess the effectiveness of SD as a peacebuilding methodology, in enhancing peaceful coexistence in an urban settlement characterised by high levels of mistrust, tensions, lack of collaboration, stigmatisation and stereotyping, polarisation and marginalisation of specific age or ethno-religious groups. The article seeks to explore, articulate and inform the extent to which SD contributes to increasing levels of trust between the participants; the extent to which SD enhances the youth’s abilities and self-efficacy to voice their challenges to their leaders in a nonviolent and effective way. Finally, the paper explores the extent to which SD in an urban setting is seen as contributing to positive interactions and improved coexistence within the broader communities.

This paper aims to contribute to the field of bottom-up peacebuilding by assessing the factors that make a grassroots level sustained dialogue-to-action process effective in contributing to peace writ large. The underlying assumption (theory of change) of the paper is three-fold. LPI believes that SD is an effective bottom-up peacebuilding approach in an urban setting in that it (1) provides a physical and virtual safe space for diverse participants to dialogue in an equitable and sustainable manner around their perceptions, experiences and issues, and therefore promotes mutual understanding and respect and increases levels of trust and common grounds, (2) enhances the participants’ capacities to collaboratively design and implement solutions to address their issues in a nonviolent and constructive way, and (3) targets key relevant stakeholders who can influence larger-scale positive change (ripple effect).

Methodology

This paper presents a case study of the “Tubonge Mtaani” project implemented in 2016 in Nairobi, Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties, by LPI and its partner EYF.

To explore the research questions and assumptions, the paper will primarily rely on a comparison of the baseline and endline data collected in the frame of the monitoring & evaluation efforts of the project. The baseline data was collected prior to the start of the dialogue sessions among all moderators and participants, while endline data was collected during the last dialogue session with the same respondents. Both studies were based on a similar survey. The survey questionnaire consisted of a mix of close and open-ended questions structured around indicators for examining individual change in terms of attitudes and behaviours among community members, as well as providing data regarding youth’s perceptions of their ability to voice their needs and reach out to key stakeholders in their communities. The tool was organised in six parts: the first part inquired

about the demographic information of the respondents; the second section asked identity questions and the attitude of the respondents towards people from different backgrounds (religious and ethnic), the third section explored the level of youth participation in community dialogue processes and in voicing their issues to relevant stakeholders, the fourth section focused on respondents' past involvement in peace and conflict projects; the fifth section collected information about the quality of relationships within and between social groups in the community by asking questions around existing social groups, connectors and dividers, existing peace initiatives in the community in the respondents' areas. The concluding section (exclusively for the end-line survey) collected participants' perspectives on the SD project, in particular the reasons behind their engagement, their suggestions for improvement and significant stories of change.

Circulating a similar survey to the same sample of respondents offered the project team an opportunity to compare findings and analyse how the dialogue-to-action process has positively (or negatively) transformed the dialogue participants. Respondents represented approximately twenty different ethnic groups, with most of ethnic groups represented by only one respondent. Five ethnic groups were particularly represented. Four out of these five ethnic groups, i.e. Kamba, Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya represent four of the five largest groups in Kenya. Therefore, the sample reflects the ethnic diversity of the country. The Somali group is the most represented group in this survey, which is consistent with the ethnic landscape in the target area, and especially the Somali-dominated area of Eastleigh. Respondents also reflected the gender, geographical and religious diversity of the target areas.

Nevertheless, the findings of the endline study should be considered as limited because the sample size would need to have been larger to be a statistically valid representative sample of the area (only 104 respondents). The sample was however representative when looking only at SD participants, even though out of 150 participants, 36 dropped out and 10 participants did not fill out the survey. Among the participants, 2 filled out the questionnaires, which were later invalidated by the project team owing to gaps and suspicions of sharing of answers.

In addition, although respondents were asked about success stories, little data was collected on the participants' experiences or ideas in terms of sharing their learning with the broader communities. Data was then collected on the matter during the collaborative peace actions implemented by the participants themselves towards the end of the project (see section below for more details).

3. Overview of the Process: Implementing Sustained Dialogue in Urban Informal Settlements

While SD has traditionally been implemented in university settings across the world, LPI has seen in this approach a real potential for positive change if applied in urban settings, out of the boundaries provided by a campus.

Building on and leveraging previous and ongoing experience in Sudan and Ethiopia, where LPI has been implementing SD on different campuses (Life & Peace Institute, 2014), LPI decided to design and implement the SD project “Tubonge Mtaani” in the urban settlements of Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties, Nairobi. Based on a thorough context analysis, LPI and its partner gave urban female and male youth from adversary groups a safe space to dialogue and deconstruct negative perceptions and stereotypes, as well as come up with a joint agenda and relevant actions to start addressing their most pressing issues.

Prior to presenting the findings of the baseline and end-line studies, this section aims to give a brief overview of the SD process and its key steps.

Convening the Strategic Who

As they form at least 35% of the Kenyan population, female and male youth (18-34 years old according to the 2010 Constitution) hold a unique position as change agents. While youth dwelling in informal urban settlements are often labelled as “vulnerable” or easily manipulated by handouts, they also have a strong potential to positively influence their communities, under the condition that their senses of agency and belonging are strengthened and space is given for them to come up with a common agenda.

Based on this observation and on recommendations formulated by the communities under the 2015 pilot research mentioned above, the “Tubonge Mtaani” project directly targeted young women and men from diverse backgrounds. Two selection processes lay foundations for the SD methodology: one, the selection of moderators (or dialogue facilitators) and two, the selection of dialogue participants. Both selection processes are led according to a set of criteria that aim to ensure the strategic quality of the direct target groups, in particular their diversity and their potential for influence among the broader communities.

The process started with the identification and selection of twenty youth community leaders, as future moderators. 150 participants were then selected, based on geographical, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic criteria. Ten dialogue groups were then formed, made of two moderators and fifteen diverse participants. Youth from diverse backgrounds were thus given an opportunity to interact in a bridge-building dialogue process.

This initial step is critical to ensure diversity and therefore relevance of the dialogue groups. Equal participation and representation was guaranteed to the extent possible, in order not to “disadvantage” one group over the other and therefore avoid replicating or importing conflictual and structural dynamics from outside within the safe space.

Familiarising the target groups with the methodology for an effective process

Following the selection of participants and the formation of the dialogue groups, the project team accompanied the dialogue participants in foundational activities, critical for the effective running of the dialogue sessions. Moderators were thus provided with an in-depth training in peacebuilding and facilitation skills. The participants were then convened to a ceremony officially launching the dialogue-to-action process. This “kick-off” enabled the project team and the moderators to share with the participants about SD methodology and to explain the successive stages of the project. Moderators conveyed their respective groups in an orientation session during which participants and moderators introduced each other, named their group and agreed on the schedule of the sessions. Dialogue groups then decided on the most pressing issue they wanted to dialogue about. Issues of police brutality and harassment, unemployment and drug abuse were initially identified by most groups.

Dialogue sessions in a safe and equitable space

Following these foundational steps, the dialogue groups started the dialogue sessions. For seven months, each group met twice a month in the premises of LPI’s partner EYF in Eastleigh. The moderators facilitated the sessions and ensured their respective dialogue group went through the four initial stages.

Despite some logistical and more substantial challenges, including the fact some participants dropped out or some groups went through the four stages much faster than initially anticipated, these sessions enabled the participants to develop more complex, informed and personalised views of others’, and to develop an agenda to address their common most pressing issues.

At the end of each dialogue session, moderators were tasked with reflecting on the session, focusing on the content of the dialogue and on the positive and negative changes observed among the participants. Moderators were then convened each month in a moderators’ reflection forum to discuss about their challenges and progress made in their groups. These platforms and different apparent requirements (filling a debriefing form) actually contributed to strengthen a culture of collaboration, learning and adaptability within the project team and the dialogue moderators.

Peace actions as a vector to the broader communities

LPI considers SD as a valuable conflict transformation tool as it focuses not only on dialogue (identity and attitudinal changes), but also offers participants the opportunity to collaboratively design and implement an agenda in the shape of peace actions, aimed to tackle their most pressing issues.

The added value of peace actions is two-fold: on the one hand, peace actions concretise and synergise the attitudinal positive changes influenced by the dialogue process and the agenda setting efforts. They constitute inclusive projects that permit interaction without loss of identity. On the other hand, peace actions play an active role as multiplier effect of the process in that they are implemented outside of the SD’s safe space. They therefore constitute vectors to share increased skills and knowledge, and alternative positive narratives, with the broader communities.

Under the “Tubonge Mtaani” project, three peace actions were implemented in the wake of the final dialogue sessions. SD participants and moderators organised three panel discussions – one per neighbourhood – where they invited different strategic stakeholders who have an influence on the three issues they wanted to be discussed in the panels, including security, unemployment and peace. Over 100 youth and other community members were invited to the events and had the opportunity to interact with representatives from the police, chief, human rights lawyers, devolved funds representatives, ward administrators among others. Young participants focused on becoming part of the solution by constructively explaining their perceptions and issues, and suggesting nonviolent relevant potential actions and policies to address them in the long-term.

During the SD closing ceremony (“kick-out”), SD participants showcased their talents while others shared success stories on how the process had helped them transform positively their lives and relationships. The ripple effect of the dialogue sessions on the broader communities was also demonstrated by stories shared in the course of the dialogue sessions, with some participants explaining that they had supported other community members, for instance by having the confidence to constructively question abuses committed by the police. Other SD participants declared having formed youth groups, as mutual aid platforms and safe spaces to keep nurturing learnings from the process.

4. Sustained Dialogue as a Catalyst Process for Attitudinal and Behavioural Change

Evaluation findings and assessments of the effectiveness of the different Sustained Dialogue projects implemented across the world reveal increased understanding, improved relationships, and intensified collaboration between the dialogue participants. While monitoring and evaluating the project’s progress towards results, LPI focused on observing positive change among the 170 participants engaged in the process. A baseline study at the beginning of the project and its comparison with an endline study towards the end of the implementation period revealed the nature and intensity of the change-s that can be attributed to the project.

The findings confirmed that positive changes among the respondents between the beginning and the end of the project, and that can be attributed to the project. These changes relate to the relationships between the participants, their ability to voice out in a constructive manner their needs

to the leaders, personal changes from vices and their ability to contribute to peaceful interactions within the community.

Sustained Dialogue to promote understanding and trust: attitudinal positive change

During the dialogue sessions, participants get to probe deep into the background and experiences of the individuals in the group, allowing them to understand one another’s behaviours and perspectives (Parker, 2006).

The baseline and endline surveys sought to grasp how understanding and trust had been fostered and strengthened by the SD process. To do so, the survey explored the extent to which the participants were able to understand people with a different ethnic and religious background. A question on whether they “**recognize the concerns of people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds**”, showed that 80% of the respondents had agreed or strongly agreed during the baseline survey and an overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement at the endline survey. One interpretation that had been given during the baseline validation was that “*The high density of population characterizing the three sub-areas of Kamukunji targeted by this baseline implies that inhabitants “interact” intensively on a daily basis, which makes them being familiar to each other’s concerns and issues*” (young man from Majengo). Another explanation may relate to the prevalence of religious teaching in these areas, both Christian and Muslim, which develops among believers the moral religious obligation to recognize the concerns of fellow beings. The fact the percentage of respondents who did not answer the question (blank) decreased from 17% to 3%, or 14 points, can explain the increase of (strongly) disagree as it may constitute a demonstration of the raised awareness among the respondents, who now seem to be more confident to express an opinion. A second interpretation to the increase of percentage of respondents disagreeing may be that the SD project has raised awareness among the participants of the demanding need to know better and interact more with people from different backgrounds in order to understand the complexity of each other’s concerns, as opposed to a simplistic and stereotyped attitude towards the “other”. In the qualitative findings, the participants stated, “*SD gave me a better understanding of people from different religions and other areas.*” (Male SD participant from Mlango Kubwa). Another participant noted, “*The tension that was between the members and lack of trust before, but after knowing one another people are now interacting and also a sense of belonging, trust and confidence was built between us.*” (Female SD participant from Eastleigh).

When disaggregated by religion, answers to the question “**do you consider your suffering to be similar to those from different backgrounds**” revealed that 14% of the Muslim respondents disagreed with the statement. This was 10 points above the baseline study, when only 4% of the Muslim respondents had disagreed. One possible interpretation may be that the dialogue sessions shed light on the degree of profiling and stigmatisation by authorities which seems to affect Muslim populations more than Christian populations in the current Kenyan context, especially in the study area. Qualitative data collected among respondents showed that they were able to transcend their religious biases as they got a chance to interact and demystify their fears. One respondent thus said “*Before SD I used to think that Muslims are bad people but afterwards I have changed my mind.*” (Female SD participant from Eastleigh). Another respondent noted, “*I had different views of Somali people and I thought that they loved only Muslims but through this SD I have learnt that they are different from what I thought and that they are not different from me or any other.*” (Female SD participant from Mlango Kubwa).

When disaggregated by gender, answers to this same question revealed that higher percentage of female respondents disagreed with the statement towards the end of the project than at the beginning (7% disagreed during the baseline study against 24% during the endline study). This increase by 17 points may be explained by the fact the dialogue sessions have enabled female participants to increase their confidence, as well as have given them space to share about their struggles and to shed light on their routine and the requirements they must comply with as young women, which are generally stricter than for young men.

Besides, the increase of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement is likely the direct result of the Sustained Dialogue project, which has offered space to the participants to share openly their struggles and look together collaboratively for solutions.

When asked **how much they agree with the following statements “I trust no one from a different religion”, “I trust some people from a different religion”, “I trust most people from a different religion”**, 10% of respondents agreed with the first statement (no one), 49% of respondents agreed with the second statement (some people) and 34% of respondents agreed with the third statement (most people). When compared with the baseline, data reveals that the percentage of respondents who agree with the fact they trust no one from a different religion has decreased by 19 points, and the percentage of respondents who agree with the fact they trust some people has increased by 12 points.

These findings are likely to be a direct result of the SD project. The percentage of respondents who trust most people from a different religion in the endline is very similar to the baseline. Indeed, although 21% of respondents had strongly agreed and 27% agreed (or 48% aggregated) in the baseline, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed and 34% agreed in the endline (or 49% aggregated). Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who strongly agree has decreased by 6 points and the percentage of respondents who agree has increased by 7 points. Therefore, the SD project does not seem to have influenced – neither negatively nor positively – the respondents who generally trust most people from a different religion.

When broken down by area of residence, the percentages of respondents reporting they trust some people from a different religion reveals some differences: 48% of respondents from Eastleigh, 62% of respondents from Majengo and 37% of respondents from Mlango Kubwa. They were respectively 28%, 46% and 38% in the baseline study. The increase by 20 points in Eastleigh and 16 points in Majengo is likely the direct result of the SD project, as it fostered positive and constructive interactions on a sustainable basis between youth from different religious groups.

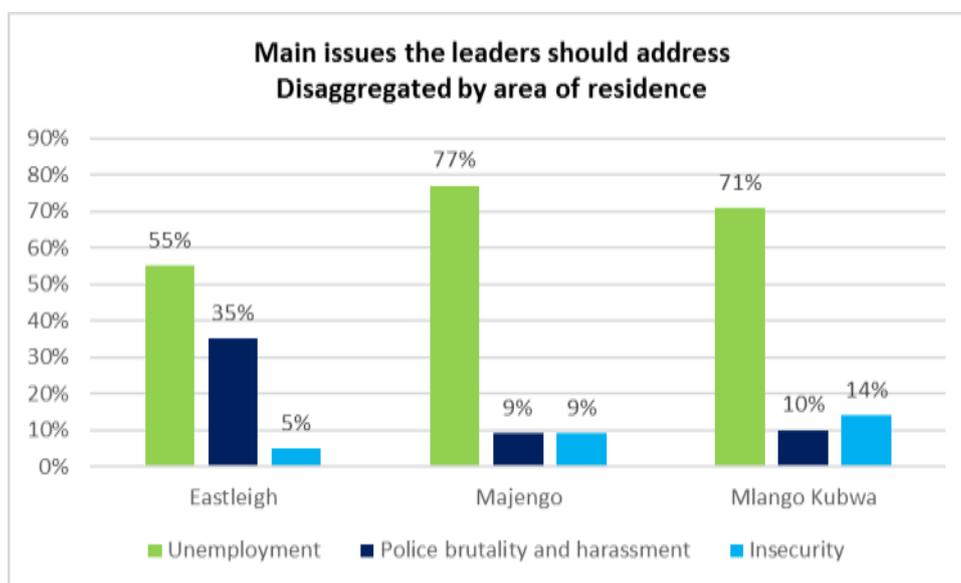
Fostering youth’s confidence and ability to set up and promote an agenda

Youth empowerment has been a major issue of concern for many development practitioners. However, most interventions have focused on providing solutions to the youth instead of promoting organic processes in which young women and men would identify and formulate their needs (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2012). Young women and men would then see their leaders as handout-providers, instead of long-term problem solvers. This tendency was revealed by respondents’ answers to the following question **“please list some of the issues that you need your leaders to address”**. During the baseline study, respondents had emphasized the cost of education and unemployment as their main challenges whereby they were stating they need to be given scholarships, bursary and finance to cater for their education. They had also mentioned that they need the leaders to get them employment opportunities. These findings had surprised the project team, as leaders, in particular political leaders, are in a position to influence more in-depth policies aimed to improve other issues which collectively affect the youth, such as access to devolved funds,

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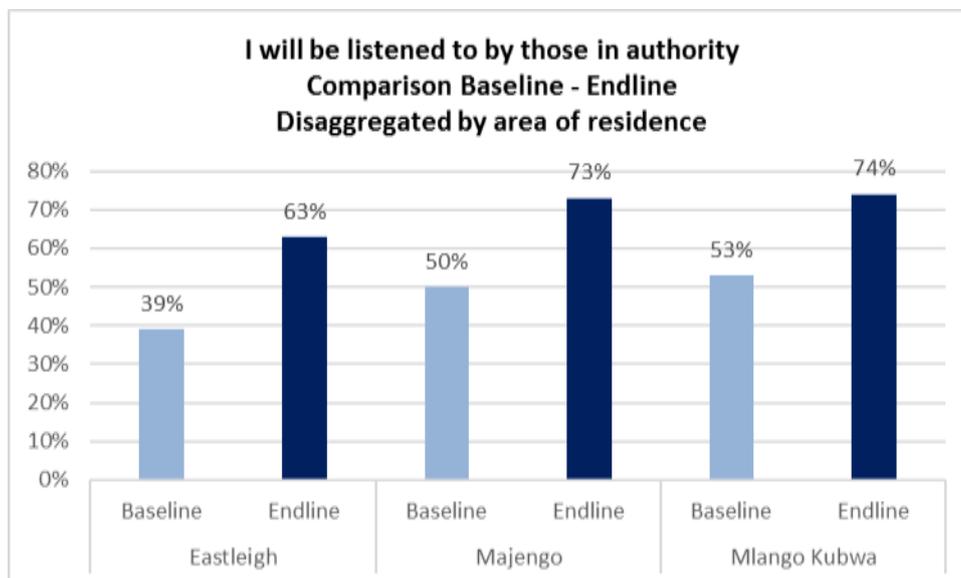
Life & Peace Institute, April 2017

police harassment, insecurity and lack of involvement of the youth. Towards the end of the project, participants’ main issues they need their leaders to address had evolved towards more structural issues. This shows that the dialogue sessions gave them an opportunity to introspect more on their challenges and gain a better understanding of what role the leaders can play as well as what role they play as they went through the various stages. Unemployment; police brutality and harassment; and insecurity thus appeared as the three first issues identified by the respondents in the endline study. As the figure below shows, 55% of respondents from Eastleigh; 77% of respondents from Majengo; and 71% of respondents from Mlango Kubwa mentioned unemployment as the first issue their leaders need to address. Police brutality and harassment was mentioned by 35% of the respondents from Eastleigh. This can be attributed to the recent frequent police search for refugees in the area and heighten police engagement with community in an effort to fight the gang group and the perception that al-Shabab group members hide in the area. One female participant from Eastleigh shared how the police arrested her because she had not carried her national identity card. She was locked up at Pangani police station. Some activists tried to secure her freedom but their efforts proved futile, until the family raised funds and bribed the police. Other dialogue participants shared on their individual actions and increased confidence, owing to their involvement in the SD process. One respondent shared on his increased confidence to interact with the police and shared how he was arrested and how he refused to give the police a bribe. He was arrested on allegations of being a terrorist and he was able to challenge the OCS that he was innocent. Another participant shared how he was able to rescue a community member from police harassment by asking the police to explain the grounds for the arrest. These diverse testimonies demonstrate the participants’ increased confidence, and therefore their increased abilities to promote their agenda and articulate their issues constructively and non-violently.



The SD process also increased the assertiveness of the youth to having their voice heard and their needs addressed. To the question “do you think you will be listened to by those in authority?”, endline data reveals that 68% of the respondents answered positively, against 32% who answered negatively. When broken down by area of residence, comparison between baseline and endline data reveals that the percentage of respondents having answered yes has increased across the three areas, in similar proportions (by 24 points in Eastleigh; 23 points in Majengo and 21 points in Mlango Kubwa). Respondents from Eastleigh seem to be slightly less confident on the fact they will be listened to by their leaders than respondents from Majengo and Mlango Kubwa. This may be related

to contextual factors, in particular an entrenched lack of trust towards Kenyan state in Eastleigh, owing to several police crackdowns since 2013-14 and frequent practices of profiling and police brutality.



The ripple effect of Sustained Dialogue on Intra and Inter-Community Interactions

As mentioned above, SD aims at improving and (re)building relationships between members of different communities. The survey sought to find out whether there were changes in the way broader communities' members interacted and whether positive interaction had been strengthened. To the question **“In the past 6 months, have you had or witnessed any positive interaction between groups in the community?”**, 74% of the respondents to the endline survey said they had witnessed positive interaction and 26% of the respondents said they had not witnessed any positive interaction. Endline data thus reveals an increase by 12 points of the percentage of respondents having witnessed positive interactions in the past six months compared to the baseline. This is likely to be a direct result of the SD project, as it has given space and opportunity to the dialogue moderators and participants to strengthen their knowledge and raise their awareness on dynamics in their communities.

When asked about the instances of positive interactions, respondents provided instructive answers regarding community connectors both in the baseline and endline studies. The percentage of respondents mentioning that they have positively interacted with other social groups while practicing sports in the past six months increased in the course of the project, with 13% of female respondents mentioning so in the endline against none in the baseline. Similarly, the proportion of male respondents mentioning sports has increased by 13 points in the course of the project (from 4% to 13%). Although 9% of female respondents had mentioned interacting positively with other social groups in times of need, they were 18% towards the end of the project. One way to interpret this increase is directly related to the SD project, as participants and moderators have increasingly invited each other during these moments, such as wedding ceremonies, births, funerals, among others.

The survey later focused on the existing social groups in the target areas and how they affect people's lives. The concept of social groups refers here to the organized interaction between different members within a community who share similar characteristics, motives and goals. Most of

the respondents noted that there are social groups in their area of residence. Endline data reveals an increase by 13 points in the proportion of respondents from Mlango Kubwa who answered yes to the question **“Are there social groups in your area?”**, from 75% to 88%. Interestingly, although 87% of respondents from Eastleigh had answered positively to the baseline survey, they were 79% in the endline. This can be attributed to their increased understanding of the notion of social group. To the question **“What social groups exist in the community you live in?”**, religious groups, youth groups, gang groups, talent groups, sports groups, women groups and community groups were the main groups mentioned by the respondents. Endline findings reveal that respondents have strengthened their understanding of the groups in their areas of residence, compared to the baseline data. The proportion of respondents who mentioned religious groups has decreased across the three areas: from 44% to 28% of respondents from Eastleigh; from 40% to 27% of respondents from Majengo; and from 17% to 7% of respondents from Mlango Kubwa. Endline data also revealed an increase in the proportion of respondents from Majengo and Mlango Kubwa who mentioned youth groups, from 61% to 73% and from 21% to 55% respectively. This is likely to be a direct result of the SD project. Respondents were indeed given space and opportunity to learn more on existing youth groups.

Furthermore, some participants joined existing groups and others formed new ones from SD discussion. At the time of writing this article, three groups have already been formed and institutionalised (registered) by SD participants coming from different areas of residence. The mission and activities of these groups remain unclear, but it seems that they will focus on promoting income-generating activities and policy messages. Besides there were notable testimonies from some participants who have decided to stop engaging in violent or non-constructive activities, as a result of the process. One participant noted in the endline evaluation, *“I used to be a robber but now after attending SD session, I have become a better person”* (young man from Eastleigh). Another female participant noted, *“I used to work as a prostitute but now I have stopped as a result of the dialogues we have been having”* (young woman from Majengo from Majengo).

These initiatives from SD project’s participants constitute a critical finding in terms of empowerment and ability of the participants to organise to voice their claims non-violently and constructively, as well as regarding the ripple effect and sustainability of the project.

5. Conclusions: SD’s contribution to sustainable peace writ large

This article aimed to explore Sustained Dialogue as a peacebuilding bottom-up methodology and assess its effectiveness in enhancing peaceful coexistence in an urban settlement characterised by high levels of mistrust, tensions, lack of collaboration, stigmatisation and stereotyping, polarisation and marginalisation of specific age or ethno-religious groups.

Based on a case study of the “Tubonge Mtaani” project implemented by LPI and EYF, the paper echoed the compared findings of the baseline and endline studies. While the paper ambitioned to contribute to the field of bottom-up peacebuilding by assessing the factors that make a grassroots level sustained dialogue-to-action process effective in contributing to peace writ large, it did not aim to revisit dialogue as a conflict transformation tool. Foundational theories, including the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954 and Northrup, 1989) or the transfer theory, have not been referred to in this present paper. Nevertheless, they remain critical to understand the added value of any dialogue-based peacebuilding project.

Between the baseline survey and the endline survey, the SD process was implemented with 170 diverse youth from three urban settlements in Kamukunji and Mathare Sub-Counties, i.e. Eastleigh, Majengo and Mlango Kubwa. This dialogue-to-action approach gave space to the youth to discuss

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around their most pressing issues, as well as to collaboratively design actions to address these issues in a non-violent way. In the course of the project, through reflection and learning efforts and platforms, LPI and EYF’s project team observed positive changes among SD participants and moderators, in terms of quality of interaction; openness to dialogue and sharing; confidence in identifying their most pressing issues; as well as ability to collaboratively work to design a relevant and effective action in their respective communities.

Comparison of baseline and endline data reveals interesting findings. Although a majority of the findings underpin the project team’s observations, a fine and detailed analysis of data reveals differences between participants – depending on their area of residence, sex, religious group that the paper strived to interpret. **One**, regarding changes in levels of trust and understanding among SD participants and moderators, findings generally reveal an increase in levels of trust within and between participants from different social groups. **Two**, the SD participants and moderators’ capacity to voice their needs and claims to other social and political actors has improved as a result of the SD project. A majority of respondents – across levels of education – has increased confidence in their ability to frame their issues and lift them up to their leaders. Some SD participants described themselves as more empowered and gave examples of challenging situations they faced fruitfully and non-violently thanks to increased knowledge acquired in the frame of the dialogue sessions and peace actions design. **Three**, the quality of cross-group interactions within and between participants from the three areas seems to have improved in the course of the project. Compared to the baseline data, a smaller percentage of respondents have interacted negatively with people from different backgrounds, and concurrently a higher percentage of respondents have witnessed positive interactions. Although it is questionable for the SD project to claim having influenced the decreased percentage of respondents who observed tensions in their areas, a collection of success stories – formally and informally collected – reveals that some SD participants proactively decided not to join any violent act in their areas, following their engagement in the SD project. Therefore, it seems that the project “Tubonge Mtaani” has contributed to fostering a conducive environment for peaceful interactions and resilience to violence.

Sustainable peace needs organic attitudinal and behavioural positive changes. Findings presented in this paper demonstrate that inclusive SD-based interventions contribute to such changes, by providing a safe space for the nurturing and sharing of alternative narratives and the emergence and shaping of a shared future between the participants and their broader communities, in addition to enhancing the participants’ capacities to design non-violent problem-solving actions. SD’s added-value thus relies on its duality, namely the focus on both identities and agenda setting and implementation, therefore promoting a culture of peace out of the safe space of the dialogue.

Building on this effective first round of dialogue-to-action in Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties, LPI is now implementing a second round of SD with the aim to scale up and leverage the potential of positive change in the targeted communities. Specific recommendations formulated by the SD first round’s participants and moderators and the implementers, presented below, have been taken into account by the project team while designing this second round.

The project was successful in fostering a conducive environment for increased levels of trust and understanding within and between different social groups, as well as in building the youth’s confidence in their potential and legitimacy to positively change their communities, and this work should be continued in the future. Positively transforming attitudes and behaviours is indeed a long-term participatory effort, while being vulnerable to external negative influences. It therefore makes sense to build on this conducive environment and past efforts to keep strengthening diverse youth from Nairobi urban settlements, ahead, during and after the 2017 general election. Most participants asked for more action plans and more dialogue sessions, thus expressing the need to keep dialoguing, as well as designing and implementing problem-solving collaborative actions.

Regularly collecting attitudinal and behavioural data – to the extent possible – would be a valuable source of information all along the SD project, not only at the beginning and towards the end. The project team will identify key relevant instances when to collect attitudinal and behavioural data from the SD participants and moderators. For instance, regularly asking to dialogue groups “How many of you have made new friends since the beginning of the dialogue?”, could provide some interesting real time data and help reorient the project early enough. Similarly, moderators’ refresher meetings could be fostered in their role of informative platforms for the moderators and the project team. More in-depth significant/success stories could be captured during the project, not only towards the end, and “humanise” the statistical findings.

In this year towards general elections, specific issues will be relevant to address during the next round of SD. SD participants and moderators have indeed explicitly expressed the desire to discuss about political intolerance. LPI envisions that dialoguing about this pressing issue, in 2017, would lead to a stronger resilience among the targeted youth and their communities to political violence. Similarly, SD participants and moderators expressed the desire of a stronger policy engagement with security actors in their areas. Building on the peace actions implemented during the project, issues emphasized by the participants, and LPI’s lessons learnt in terms of policy efforts in Kenya, the project team could ensure an effective and sensitive engagement with relevant security stakeholders.

Linkages between the SD project and LPI’s other dialogue projects in Kamukunji and Mathare sub-counties will create synergies for more effective interventions. Owing to the levels of mobility and interactions between inhabitants of different communities in Nairobi’s informal urban settlements, participants to the SD project and to LPI’s community dialogues (funded by SMC) most likely know each other. Building on the existing links between the dialogue participants and fostering linkages between both projects, for instance during peace actions, could help address more effectively (vulnerability to) inter-communal violence. This strand should be explored further by LPI and its partners.

6. References

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