

TRANSFORMING A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE TO A CULTURE OF DIALOGUE

LOCATION	Jur River County (Udici, Kangi, Dhikou and Tharkueng Bomas)
IMPLEMENTER	Hope Agency for Relief and Development (HARD)
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“We will take the lead in discouraging the culture of violence and revenge killing that exist in our community. Instead, our people should use dialogue to review traditional beliefs”, said Mrs. Kasmalla Majaga Awet, the chairlady of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Committee, during a community dialogue about revenge killings in Udici Boma in Jur River County. She called upon the warring communities to reach an agreement to stop revenge killings. “The agreement should be signed by elders, youth and women and the entire community needs to be informed about it”, she also said.

A culture of violence and impunity

Many types of conflict affect Udici Boma. These include inter-communal conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, which are usually triggered by uncontrolled cattle movement resulting in crop destruction. But also intra-communal conflict occurs because of violations of social norms, excessive alcohol use, early marriage, and sectarian animosities that find their origin in the civil war. Conflicts lead to a loss of lives, displacement, destruction of property and increased vulnerability of especially women, widows, children, disabled and the elderly. Violence between ethnic communities is exacerbated by a culture of revenge killings. Impunity of the various crimes is widespread, as government institutions that ought to protect communities, such as local administration, police and justice structures, respond slow and lack capacities.

Setting up a Disaster Risk Reduction Committee

In February 2014, Hope Agency for Relief and Development (HARD) conducted a Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) in Udici to understand the hazards that affect the people, as well as to map out local capacities, gaps and possible response strategies. Conflict and drought were identified as the main hazards, but also livestock diseases, environmental degradation and inadequate water supply were mentioned.

The PDRA recommended the establishment of a community based institution to coordinate and lead in the implementation of the disaster risk reduction measures, and to identify and respond to conflict issues in the community. Therefore HARD established a DRR committee, comprising of 15 members (8 women, 7 men), including clan leaders, customary institutions and community representatives. The DRR committee works in collaboration with the existing local government structures and peacebuilding actors such as the payam/boma administrators, area chiefs, the police and church structures.



Photo HARD

DRR committee members in Dhikou are trained by HARD on the facilitation of community dialogues.

Capacity building of the DRR committee was done jointly with these other actors. The trainings focused on roles and group dynamics, conflict resolution skills, basic knowledge on human rights, resource mobilization, good governance and leadership. Also, the DRR committee was supported with seed grants that its members can take out as loan that is reimbursable against a 30 percent interest rate. The interest generated helps to facilitate the committee to carry out its duties.

The committee in action

The DRR committee conducted two community action-plan meetings in Udici Boma to identify priority issues to be addressed in the community, and facilitated exchange visits between Udici, Kangi and Dhikou Bomas to discuss local conflicts and share experiences. The committee also facilitated three intra-community peace dialogues between pastoralist and farmers. The dialogues aimed to resolve disputes arising from crop destruction and killing of cattle, whilst finding an agreement on compensation for damage in accordance with the 2016 Marial Bai conference resolutions on damages, compensation and procedures (see previous case story).

During one of the DRR dialogue meetings (18 May 2017) both communities signed an agreement prohibiting revenge killings. The DRR committee disseminated the agreement to the community, which also helped the cooperation with the police in handling cases of dispute. It also led to the introduction of a similar agreement in Gette and Tharkueng Bomas. Overall there now is a significant reduction in the number of revenge killings reported and warring communities have embraced dialogue on local issues for peace.



Photo HARD

HARD and the DRR committee hold a peace dialogue in Udici.

Preconditions for successful dialogue

The dialogues are guided by community action plans on peace, security and justice, making solutions proposed relevant to the context. In all these initiatives, women and youths representation was guaranteed and their views have been included and acknowledged in decision-making. There is furthermore strong collaboration between the DRR committee and local administration at boma and payam level. Finally, as this case shows, it is important that all parties to the conflict sign the agreements concluded on and that these are widely disseminated in the community.

Way forward

In some cases, local governance structures lack the capacities and means to support the implementation of the community action plans. That is why it is important to share these plans widely to attract broader stakeholder support for the implementation, and to mobilize resources for the continued operation of the DRR committee. Also, DRR committee members often lack capacities to engage with higher administrative levels. Building their lobby and advocacy skills, next to addressing general management capacities, can help overcome this.