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Peace Connector Projects: Bishop Korir's Strategy for Grassroots Peacebuilding

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Abstract

This essay is a narration of my personal experiences in peacebuilding in the North Rift region of Kenya as a resident of the region, and peace worker from 1995 to date. I draw from my work experiences with the National Council of Churches of Kenya (1995-2005), Catholic Relief Services and the Mennonite Central Committee (2007-2019). Specifically, how connector projects were used as a strategy for grassroots peacebuilding for the conflict-affected communities in the North Rift Valley region. The processes of mobilizing the communities, challenges, and outcomes of reconciliation efforts are discussed. The four connector projects discussed show the rewards attained from embracing collaboration as a key prerequisite for peace and reconciliation among communities in conflict.

Background Information

It is important to discuss the context that necessitated the concept of the connector project to encourage social cohesion and improve livelihoods among warring communities. The connector projects become more probable to support efforts to promote social cohesion due to the interest in addressing problems affecting the communities. Let's start with a brief history of conflict in the North Rift Region and the resulting interventions.

In 1991, the ethnic clashes started in the Meteitei farm in Nandi County. The conflict, which was among the Nandi and Kikuyu over land tenure grievances, spread quickly to other parts of the country in a manner not experienced before. Even worse, as the political campaigns for multiparty politics intensified so did violence based on ethnic animosities. Since the advent of multiparty politics in Kenya in 1992, persistent ethnic tensions have occurred after every election cycle leading to violent conflicts. The conflict continued into 1997 recurring in 2007 with far worse consequences including the displacement of close to 600,000 people, and deaths of 1,000 people. According to the African Watch report (1993), the violence was state-sponsored. Politicians took advantage of ethnic identity politics to perpetuate their dominance and hegemony in an environment characterized by scarcity of resources, limited access to these resources, fear and prejudice, income inequality, and development disparities to spur resentments and division (Korir, et al 2017).

In the North Rift Valley region, the conflict brought up tensions and divisions between the local Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities over land grievances. In Kerio Valley battles between Pokot and Marakwet communities, instigated by cattle rustling, raged leading to cycles of revenge and counter-revenge (Korir, 2009). Political authorities continued to sow seeds of discord, dividing citizens along tribal lines and instigating inter-ethnic violence.

Bishop Cornelius Korir and his Catholic Diocese of Eldoret began to respond to the conflict in numerous ways to alleviate, contain, and end the conflicts that had divided local communities since 1992. In working with the communities Bishop Korir realized how the conflicts had

divided the people and resulted in violence which destabilized them. Inter-ethnic animosities seemed to have accelerated the use of arms preventing communities to resolve their disputes. A pervasive “culture of violence” was taking root and straining relations between communities, increasing tensions, prejudice and stereotypes, and separated communities from each other (Korir, 2009). For example, in the Burnt Forest area of the Diocese of Eldoret, Bishop Korir found that in the aftermath of the 2007/08 post-election violence in Kenya, the central problem that affected communities during and immediately after the violence was the imaginary boundaries that communities created to separate themselves (Korir, 2009). These imaginary boundaries prevented interactions and dialogue between members of the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities and increased animosities between them.

Bishop Korir relentlessly responded to these recurrent political and inter-ethnic violence through local initiatives to restore relationships between conflicting communities. He facilitated *Amani Mashinani* (Peace at Grassroots), a grassroots peacebuilding intervention that he conceived as an opportunity to offer some sustainable solutions to the problems he encountered. The goal of *Amani Mashinani* was to engage local communities in collective activities and dialogue about finding possibilities for peace. As a grassroots peacebuilding model, *Amani Mashinani* became the safe space where conflicting communities could discuss causes of their conflict, craft local peace agreements or "social contracts," and carry out joint (connector) projects of interest to all parties, such as rebuilding a health center or constructing a rural road. Connector projects are part of *Amani Mashinani*'s step-by-step process that aimed to bridge social divisions and bring conflicting groups closer to each other, increase shared participation while building solidarity among various community groups. The step-by-step process involves the following twelve steps of community peacebuilding used in *Amani Mashinani* (Korir, 2017, p. 5).

1. Analysis, intervention, and interruption
2. Protection, sanctuary, and relief
3. One-to-One meetings
4. Small group to small group meetings
5. Sharing food
6. Intra-ethnic meeting
7. Airing of grievances
8. Preparation of agenda and inter-ethnic meetings
9. Reporting back and caucusing with communities
10. Peace connector projects
11. Social contract Monitoring
12. Monitoring and ongoing development of the agenda

This essay discusses how connector projects became a beacon of peace among warring communities in the North Rift region of Kenya. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) defines connector projects as projects designed to reduce division and tensions caused by conflict and strengthen social connections based on the principles of inclusion, participation, and integration (CRS, 2017). Specifically, the essay discusses how connector projects were used as a tool for social cohesion and reconciliation among warring communities in the North Rift region. To a large extent, I discuss how Bishop Korir mobilized the communities to rebuild their relationships and improve their livelihoods through the connector projects. The four connector projects

discussed show the potential of targeting communities to embrace collaboration as central to peace and reconciliation.

Mobilizing Communities for Collaborative Work

In this section, I discuss actions taken to mobilize communities to work together prior to starting the connector projects. One of Bishop Korir's first steps to respond to the conflict was to identify a process that would bring parties to engage each other in a constructive dialogue. He knew that strong social bonds, trust and norms, and reciprocity were important for social groups to successfully mediate and mitigate conflict (Korir, 2017). Bishop Korir started off by facilitating key conflict actors to first dialogue so they could discover their individual and collective strengths and their mutual responsibilities. In 1997 while working with the Pokot and Marakwet in Kerio Valley, Bishop Korir started facilitating dialogue with respected elders of the warring communities, and later with the Kikuyu and Kalenjin elders in Yamumbi/Kapateldon during the post-election violence of 2007/8. The elders of these warring communities understood the value of dialogue and had, in the wake of the fighting, displayed a deep desire to embrace peace and shun violence (Korir, 2009). They began discussions and negotiations through intra-inter-ethnic meetings. These intra-ethnic meetings led to inter-ethnic meetings. Bishop Korir was methodical in his approach to the communities. For example, rather than focus on issues and obstacles that separated them during the conflict, he decided to focus on what connected and energized the communities. He reached out to all conflict actors, at all levels in the community and used events such as where people shared food or local beer and frequent visits in the conflict areas to bring the people together. These events were important in a context where communities were socially fragmented, neighbors did not see eye to eye, and hatred, distrust, anger, despair, and hopelessness were rife. The way out of these problems was to prioritize social cohesion activities where the communities would collaborate and work together.

Energizing the communities to take responsibility for their circumstances was important. To do so, Bishop Korir was mindful of his outreach efforts. He wanted his efforts to show the importance of equal representation of members of both communities including women and the youth in the planned activities regardless of age, gender or ethnic identity. He also energized communities through cultural and biblical examples that communities could relate to. As the dialogue sessions progressed and become more productive and less tense, Bishop Korir initiated connector projects to increase interactions among different ethnic communities, and to solve common problems communities faced. He encouraged the communities to identify leadership teams to lead, supervise and monitor activities. There was emphasis placed on cultivating respect among the leaders so as to promote successful interactions among the conflict-affected communities. These interactions increased levels of trust which helped communities to participate in joint projects such as building roads, houses, schools, bridges, and cattle dips that were destroyed during the violence. He figured that such activities would encourage reconciliation and develop shared work ethics among communities (Korir, 2009).

When it was evident that discussions about how to move forward were productive, Bishop Korir introduced the first short-term connector project, which involved constructing a portable toilet at the Diocesan offices before venturing to other places. In doing so, he wanted to gauge the communities' willingness to work together. He found that people were able to interact freely without necessarily having to confront the most difficult aspects of their conflict -notably land

tenure grievances and limited resources- which they still did not feel comfortable confronting. It was pleasantly surprising to witness the process of building trust and understanding while focusing on an external project that was to benefit them all not just one ethnic group. After this initial connector project, Bishop Korir's next step was to see how this positive energy would be replicated in elsewhere in the community. He tasked the communities to identify areas where to start the connector projects, what the projects would be, and who would implement it. Several of these connector projects were conceived and implemented in areas where mixed communities lived or in the border areas dividing two or more communities. Communities themselves identified the projects and the Diocese provided skills training to facilitate their implementation. In the Burnt Forest area, for example, where the Kalenjin and Kikuyu live, all members of the community including elders, youth and women participated in identifying and implementing connector projects, which included rehabilitation of a local school and construction of a bridge that mutually benefitted them. Members of the school community worked together in a non-competitive environment and relied on each other. In Lelan, both the Marakwet and Pokot farmers worked together to build and manage a cooperative society.

Examples of Peace Connector Projects

Below I discuss examples of connector projects that Bishop Korir helped to implement as a way to support rebuild relationships and reconciliation among the warring communities.

Rehabilitation of a Cattle Dip and Establishment of a Cooperative Society in Lelan

The first peace connectors implemented was in 1989 in Lelan. Bishop Korir had been invited into the area to intervene in a conflict where the Pokot/Marakwet communities were engaged in a bloody clash over cattle theft. Several hundreds of peoples had been displaced from their homes due to the violence. Bishop Korir started his intervention by first inviting members of the two warring communities into dialogue. The dialogue went on for several days, after which he asked community members what they wanted to do as a symbol of peace and to seal their agreement. The project of choice was to rehabilitate a community cattle dip that had been destroyed during the violence that affected the border area of West Pokot and Marakwet. Bishop Korir supported the project and further welcomed the idea to build cattle dips in neutral territory. He encouraged the two communities to interact and this helped reduce cattle rustling. Building cattle dips helped to prevent loss of livestock to disease and identify those stolen by rustlers.

Since the Pokot and Marakwet frequently fought over cattle, Bishop Korir asked the people of Lelan to discern ways to cultivate the seeds of a new economy—one that was not rooted in violence and exploitation but would serve as the hook that connects them. The community decided to start small with funding from the Diocese. They build a cattle dip in the boundary between the conflicting Marakwet and Pokot communities. They also established a Management Committee composed of representatives of both communities to maintain the structure (Korir, et al, 2017). Those who used the cattle dip reported having more healthy cows. This was a dividend from cooperation. Today, the cattle dips in Lelan at Kamelei, Korongoi, Kipteber, and Kapsait continue to serve some 300 cattle every Saturday (Korir, 2017). Following this success, the neighboring communities expressed interest in building cattle dips and participating in agricultural activities and dairy farming.

As the milk production increased, the Peace Committee decided to build a milk processing and cooling plant in the border between the two communities. In 2008 they agreed to set up Lelan Highland Dairies to invest in livestock and to improve their livelihoods to discourage cattle rustling (Standard Newspaper, 2013). The plant registered 3,000 cooperative members from both groups, equally serving on the board as well as the staff. The farmers who joined the Cooperative were all shareholders; each share costing 1,000 KES (US\$11). To maintain equitability, no one was allowed to own more than five shares. The Cooperative also made special efforts to include women and youth, who are often excluded from community development projects (Korir, et al, 2017). In the beginning, the Cooperative produced over 600 kilograms of milk per day but increased to a daily output of about 17,000 kilograms by the end of 2014. The expanded production increased the sale of milk which was a gain for the communities though investments made to launch four satellite coolers in each community to reduce on transport costs. Since all the shareholders owned the satellite coolers, it gave them a stake in each other's communities (Korir, et al, 2017.).

Through this project, the Pokot and Marakwet communities were able to bridge their differences and forge a new common identity. As people saw the success of the project, more interactions were experienced leading to growing interest to work together to meet common goals. Lelan Highland Dairies uses its logo to tell the story of the communities' long journey to peace. The logo shows a hill overlooking the community with a cross placed to it, and a light that beams down from the hilltop. The log also has two cows that face each other. They represent the Pokot and Marakwet communities.

Relief Seeds Distribution work in Yamumbi and Kapteldon.

During the post-election violence of 2008, Bishop Korir received relief items from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) who wanted to assist some 228 internally displaced families from Yamumbi, Eldoret. Working together with CRS, Bishop Korir distributed seeds and fertilizer to smallholder farmers to replace stocks that were burned during the violence, and to reduce the impact of the violence during the cropping season (CRS annual report, 2009). The targeting of households destined to receive relief items was based on an explicit criterion where only the needy households of the internally displaced persons were to receive the items. Drawing from his experience with the Pokot/Marakwet, Bishop Korir engaged members of Yambumbi/Kapteldon Peace Committee to participate in the distribution of the relief items. The problems arising from this committee revealed that the community did not have much experience in relief distribution as the Pokot and Marakwet communities. There were misunderstanding between a CRS staff and the peace committee members. During a discussion on how the supplies would be shared, one of the CRS officers explained that the top priority of their emergency project was to help internally displaced people (mostly Kikuyu), though the rest of the community would also benefit from the *mabaki* which translates as "what is left" in Kiswahili. The Kalenjin participants misinterpreted this word to mean that they would only receive the 'left-overs', scraps or lesser quality seeds – and walked out of the meeting in protest (Korir 2009). Fortunately, a Diocesan staff intervened and persuaded the Kalenjin elders that no offense was intended and that it was simply a misinterpretation of the word "*mabaki*". The elders were agreeable to the explanation offered and following further discussions arrived at a decision to give larger share of the relief items to the internally displaced people. The youth offered to assist elderly people from both the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities to grow food.

On the day of distribution of the relief items, it was the first-time many neighbors had met since the post-election violence. In a particularly moving moment, a Kalenjin woman ran over to a Kikuyu woman and embraced her. The embrace can be said to have yielded good results as people worked together to produce food with bountiful harvest. One woman harvested 35 bags of maize from her one acre of land. As an appreciation to the Diocese, the Peace Committee gave 10% of their harvest from the relief seeds to the Diocese. This was an unsolicited token of appreciation. Bishop Korir later distributed this to other displaced persons in Burnt Forest and Timboroa. Community members testified that the donation of seeds and fertilizer brought people together. (Korir, 2009).

Peace Road in Yamumbi/Kapteldon

In 2009, following months of dialogue, the Yamumbi Peace Committee decided to engage in another collaborative project. During the 20078 post-election violence, the Kikuyu community in Yamumbi village could not cross the Lemook river that acts as a boundary into the Kalenjin side of Kapteldon and vice versa. Through the support of CRS and Caritas Australia (supported by AusAID), Bishop Korir helped to rehabilitate an eight-kilometer road linking the two villages as their peace connector project (CRS, 2013).

The two communities joined hands together on the project to foster free exchange, movement, and communication as well as to provide work and income to local youth (Korir, 2009). Rather than use machines, communities opted to use manual labor so the youth would interact and get to know each other as they worked. They selected 40 youth from each village, five elderly men from each side to work as foremen, and a supervisor and secretary from both communities. Bishop Korir provided the tools for the youth to use but he intentionally provided less, so they could learn to share and communicate about what they have available for the benefit of the community. Youth working on this project were able to talk and had so much fun as they 'played, ate and worked together,' during the 20 days. After the project was complete the youth formed an association, called 'After the Peace Road Project, what?' to continue supporting each other through income-generating activities. The association is funded by membership fees and provides small loans to members (Korir, 2009.)

Members of the Peace Committee in Yamumbi/Kapteldon reported that the situation improved after they implemented peace connector projects in their community. People easily moved from one village to the other the same way goods and tractors for plowing moved freely showing an increase in interaction and gradual reduction in tension between the two communities. Other positive outcomes include gradual resettlement of those who had been displaced by the conflict. Peace Committee members' positive attitudes toward the potential for reconciliation has resulted into reducing hostility and tension substantially.

After the road project was completed, the two communities decided to build a bridge over the Lemook River that divides them. Previously, the 'bridge' was a ford and a narrow footbridge. Bishop Korir again asked CRS to fund the project. The two communities worked together to complete it. Years later, a quarry was established in the area, which provided employment to the local youth. Small business enterprises thrived, and the road continued to enhance movement of people, goods and services between the two villages that were previously hit by violence. Elders

and the Peace Committees of the two villages continue to meet several years after the project ended. They monitor the peace situation and continue to intervene when conflicts arise. They also maintain peaceful relations among communities bound by their signed agreement (interview with Yamumbi Peace committee).

Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC)

As already noted, conflict in the North Rift region of Kenya often arises in part from differential access to development. Marginalized communities resent their exclusion from the fruits of the national economy and widespread unemployment enables militias to recruit young people more easily. Further, many conflicts within families are exacerbated by a lack of resources (Korir et al., 2016). The gendered distribution of money meant that women were asking men for funds to cover their external aid.

Establishing ‘peace connector projects’, therefore needed to look beyond the surface to understand the deep-rooted causes of violence and its recurrence. One of the ways that Bishop Korir and the Diocese tried to overcome economic exclusion, particularly of women and youth, was through our Savings and Internal Lending to Communities (SILC) program, supported by Caritas. This is an approach promoted by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to help poor communities who are unable to access financial services from formal institutions to form groups, pool their savings and make loans to each other. This approach has created economic opportunities for nearly 1.8 million people who live in the world’s most impoverished areas. According to the SILC reports 80% of SILC group members were women and over 60% were youth. Each SILC group consisted of around 20 members who were of similar economic status. They saved money regularly and lend it to each for livelihood projects. SILC also contributed to a social welfare fund that they manage themselves to help members in crisis or who have been particularly affected by the post-election violence.

Since 2009 SILC had extended financial services to 127,000 people who were otherwise unable to save and borrow money (SILC report, 2018). CRS and the Diocese provided training for members in business development and capacity strengthening to new savings groups, using a highly sustainable market-based approach. Upon completing their first 12-month cycle, groups can operate on their own. With the help of field officers, they set rules about how much to lend each other and how. Many of these field officers were selected because of their participation in local peace processes and we use the SILC meetings to also propagate the message of peace and reconciliation.

The SILC program enabled women to have access to the resources themselves. Members of SILC groups in Burnt Forest and Yamumbi/Kapteldon helped each other rebuild houses burned down in the conflict. Being organized enables SILC groups to better access external microfinance funding, such as the government’s Youth Enterprise Fund and Women Enterprise Fund (Korir, et al., 2017).

Additional examples of Connector Projects

By 2013, Bishop Korir implemented six additional connector projects in the “hotspots” areas of his Diocese, through the support of USAID, CRS, and other development partners. In Burnt Forest, he constructed a bridge and rebuilt a school in an area where Kalenjini and Kikuyu

communities were at the loggerheads over political rivalry and helped reunite them (CRS report, 2010). The school attracted students of both communities, built links between children, and encouraging interaction between parents. A rehabilitated school administration block at Koiluget secondary school now serves the community and provides space for holding community peace meetings, where cross-community friendships are built and breaking down layers of prejudice. In another ethnically mixed area of Timboroa, Bishop Korir helped rebuilt houses destroyed during the violence. After one house was completed, some people from another ethnic group who had looted property from the home offered to return it. This was quite an unexpected gesture and did much to heal some of the local mistrust and divisions (Korir et. al, 2017).

Challenges of Implementing Peace Connector Projects

Not all the peace connector projects and activities were particularly effective, especially where they were poorly managed. For example, in Yamumbi, the Peace Committee nearly broke down over disagreements about how relief supplies should be distributed. Even though they weathered the storm, it caused many problems in the short-term. This and similar cases show how connector projects can further separate communities, especially when a project or the resulting relief, structure or institution is not well managed and is seen to benefit one or the other group more.

Lack of ownership can also be a challenge, as many of the peace connector projects were often conceived, initiated, organized and supported by the Diocese through the effort of Bishop Korir, who was really a third party in the conflict.

To prevent these problems and ensure that Peace Connector Projects are effective, sustainable, community-owned and productive, it is important that the process is as inclusive as possible. In his book, Bishop Korir suggests various ways that can be considered for sustainability. His suggestions are also consistent with Allport's (1979) ideas on conditions for intergroup contact theory.

1. There should be a careful and thorough needs assessment to identify the key problems that would be in the interest of both communities to solve. Failure to do a proper assessment can lead to projects that are unneeded and waste time and money.
2. Projects should be designed carefully, to ensure that they actually address the issues they are intended to solve, plan for possible problems and are technically sound.
3. The local people should feel that they own the project and have full participation in its management and direction. If the project is imposed on them by outsiders, they will be less likely to ensure its success.
4. Lines of authority should be clearly defined: Who is in charge of what? Who is responsible for financial accounting? Which decisions are made by the entire Committee and which are left to managers? If such questions are not answered, conflicts over power and authority can sap energy from a good project.
5. There should be tight accountability mechanisms in place to prevent misuse of resources. Corruption will only intensify the conflict and encourage the belief that one side cannot be trusted in good faith.
6. The project should benefit as many people as possible in the community, to show the benefits of peace to the entire village, not just a lucky few,

7. The distribution of such benefits should be equitable. The criteria for distribution should be agreed upon in advance by the Committee, to prevent conflicts over who gets what and how much. The reasoning behind such allocation should be explained clearly and carefully to the villagers concerned so that rumors, misinformation, and gossip do not spread.
8. If the project is a building or some kind of structure, it should be located in an area that is considered 'neutral territory', in which all people will feel welcome.
9. The project should encourage and incentivize interaction between the two communities at all points in the project development and management process. Ideally, the end result should also facilitate links between them.
10. The Peace Committee should monitor the project's progress carefully, to correct any problems and deal with any conflicts that might arise.

Personal Reflections on the Success of Connector Projects

The use of connector projects is evidently important to encourage social cohesion and reconciliation by encouraging relationship building. I was able to witness transformation of conflict whereby communities chose to focus on doing things which they could see positive outcomes in contrast to the outcomes of the conflict. Most of all, it was evident that the communities trusted the bishop's goodwill and commitment to peace. Bishop Korir modeled integrity and selflessness which the communities could emulate. A significant outcome is that through these projects Bishop Korir was able to achieve increased interactions among communities and helped to reduce tensions in areas that previously experienced violence. In Lelan, for example, the area has been calm since 2012. In Burnt Forest and Yamumbi, committees have reported having experienced calm since 2009 and are now resolving their conflicts amicably. They also continue to dialogue, meaning peace connector projects helped improved community relations as they are now more tolerant of each other – even though there are certain areas that still experience tensions. As a peace practitioner, this experience where I was able to witness the ups and downs, and dos and don'ts of 'peace connector projects' was insightful. For example, I learned that working together makes it possible for the shared goal to be achieved, rather than saying working together is necessary for the shared goal to be achieved. While Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT) has not been directly cited in the cases that I have discussed, it has been used as the basis for such joint projects based on mutual interests elsewhere, and I contend that it informs *how Amani Mashinani* and the peace connector projects were conceptualized (see Allport, 1979; Sherif, et al., 1988; Ioanou, et al., 2015, Pagucco, 2020). As a matter of fact, the peace connector project is part of *Amani Mashinani* architecture. It is Step #10 in the *Amani Mashinani* design.

In view of the above, I wish to highlight an observation that can be said to justify the relevance of peace connector projects. Talla (2019) argues that since interethnic conflicts put a serious strain on social cohesion, and communities in conflict tend to be socially fragmented, they exhibit high levels of exclusion, inequality, low consensus, and uneven development (Talla, 2019). Connector projects can, therefore, be useful tools to restore and build strong social bonds, trust, and norms, as well as reciprocity between groups. Additionally, they can also catalyze factors that bring identity groups closer to each other and contribute to peaceful outcomes. According to Talla (2017) the essence of a socially cohesive society is one where

there is an “abundance of associations that bridge social divisions” and where robust civic institutions exist to make democracy more responsive, inclusive, transparent and accountable.

Connector project can be a platform to develop friendships and build shared identities among individuals across diverse ethnic identities and religious backgrounds in Kenya. They have the potential to empower communities, particularly women and at-risk youth with ideas on income-generating activities to improve livelihoods and help reduce vulnerability for recruitment into violent activities. In the long term, the connector projects can help address the root causes of conflicts, including resource-based conflicts.

One of the lessons learned from my experience is the fact that I was able to see the interconnectedness of ideas and practices pertaining to the value of peace connector projects. For example, the relationship between dialogue, peace connector projects with superordinate, mutually beneficial goals, and relationship building is explicit in the manner peace connector projects work. Judging from the case studies discussed above, it would appear that preliminary dialogue focused on discussing shared values and identifying important community needs can form the basis of more joint projects. The potential for more projects lies in interactions that happen during peace connector projects’ activities.

The projects discussed reveal that for inter-group contact to be successful, and the joint project to be successful, more than one contact event is necessary. There needs to be ongoing contact. So, for example, spending a day together picking up trash in the community to make the community cleaner and healthier would probably not be enough contact. Spending a couple weeks doing this would be more effective, partly because the joint project must provide an opportunity for the participants to get to know each other, and engage in non-superficial conversation where they can discover similarities (and differences), and partly by working together one develops a sense of “We,” that signifies a team accomplishing something together.

Conclusion and Key Lessons from the Peace Connector Projects

These ideas and stories of transformation demonstrate the potential for local projects to create positive environments for individuals and communities in conflict and willing to encounter one another in a conflict-free zone of cooperation. Through the efforts of Bishop Korir, we see how construction of specific structures, relationships, and institutions benefit the communities at large. These structures continue to serve as a symbol of peace and cooperation with the communities. However, it must be noted that peace connector projects alone are certainly not a panacea for highly escalated, intractable inter-group conflicts. They are only one element that Bishop Korir found essential to bring about eventual conflict transformation and stable peace in his Diocese. Through his wisdom and experience he was able to act with spontaneity to bring about positive change.

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