

## **Dialogue at Mfangano Island: Living on the Margins as Small Communities**

On Sunday, 31st August 2025, fellows of the 2nd Kenyan Program on Pedagogies for Community (KPPC) participated in a dialogue visit to Mfangano Island in Lake Victoria as part of KPPC's experiential learning approach. The visit created a space where peace education intersected with history, culture, and the lived realities of marginalized communities.

The dialogue centered on engagement with the Abasuba community, the only Bantu-speaking community living among river-lake Nilotic communities around Lake Victoria. Through guided storytelling, archival materials, and oral histories at the Abasuba Peace Museum, fellows explored the community's long struggle for cultural recognition, linguistic survival, and social inclusion within the Kenyan nation-state. The discussions revealed that marginalization extends beyond economic and political exclusion to include cultural erasure, particularly when small communities face assimilation and sustained neglect.

The visit was complemented by an interaction with the Ekigiri Traditional Dancers, whose performance offered a living expression of Abasuba identity. The music and movement illustrated how culture operates as memory, resistance, and continuity, preserving history, transmitting values, and strengthening communal bonds across generations. Fellows reflected on how cultural expression serves not only artistic purposes but also functions as a political and social tool for resilience and self-definition.

These encounters informed a reflective dialogue under the theme "*Living on the Margins: The Role of Small Communities in Nation-Building.*" Fellows discussed how minority and marginalized communities contribute to national unity and social cohesion despite limited recognition and representation. The dialogue highlighted that dominant narratives of nationhood often overlook the foundational role played by small communities through their cultural practices, ecological knowledge, and peace traditions.

A key outcome of the dialogue was the shared recognition that meaningful nation building is incomplete without cultural justice. Participants emphasized that inclusion must move beyond symbolic acknowledgment to encompass language preservation, equitable development, and genuine participation in national decision-making processes. The Abasuba experience challenged fellows to reimagine the "margins" not as spaces of weakness, but as sites of creativity, endurance, and moral insight.

The session reaffirmed a core KPPC insight: a resilient and peaceful nation is built not by silencing difference, but by recognizing, respecting, and honoring it.