

## **1<sup>st</sup> KPPC PROGRAM ON LIVING WITH DIFFERENCE**

**Theme:** Engaging Tribalism to Build a Vibrant Civil Society in Kenya

**Dates:** August 22 – September 4, 2025

**Location:** Kajiado, Nairobi,

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Kenya Program on Pedagogies of Community (KPPC), in partnership with CEDAR (Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion), successfully held its inaugural school in Kenya in 2024. This milestone event marked the first of its kind in East Africa, dedicated to addressing Kenya's deeply entrenched tribal, cultural, and socio-political divisions. The program, themed *Engaging Tribalism to Build a Vibrant Civil Society in Kenya*, was structured to facilitate meaningful dialogue, practical learning, and the implementation of the CEDAR pedagogy, which emphasizes inclusion, difference, and the politics of identity.

The school was successfully conducted between August 2-15, 2024. The timing and theme were particularly relevant given the country's history of ethnic tensions, especially around elections. Kenya's post-election violence has its roots in both political and ethnic divisions. The KPPC sought to address these underlying issues by using the CEDAR pedagogy to facilitate inter-communal dialogue, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence. This inaugural program provided a platform for participants to reflect on tribalism not merely as a political issue, but as a deeper societal challenge of coexistence.

KPPC's mission is to create lasting social cohesion and peace by addressing the root causes of division and exclusion in Kenyan society. The school brought together 30 participants from various tribal and religious backgrounds, fostering an environment where differences could be discussed openly and constructively. The participants engaged in an intensive week-long program aimed at equipping community organizers, religious leaders, and individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to challenge tribalism and exclusion in their communities.

The key focus of this school was to ensure that the participants not only learned the theoretical aspects of the CEDAR pedagogy but also gained practical experience in community organizing and leadership. It was an ambitious undertaking for KPPC, given Kenya's historical struggles with tribalism, and was aligned with the broader mission of CEDAR, which seeks to foster peaceful coexistence in divided societies worldwide.

## **About the KPPC Center**

The KPPC center, based in Kajiado, is located on an 11-hectare piece of land owned by the Anglican Church and sits at the heart of the Maasai community. This facility, formerly a girls' secondary school, was repurposed for community empowerment projects. KPPC turned the center into a vibrant learning space featuring classrooms, dormitories, a community gallery, a library, and a podcast room. The center is positioned as a vital hub for local knowledge, engaging Kenyans on critical social issues.

## **PARTICIPANTS AND FELLOWS**

The school featured 27 fellows, including 14 Kenyans, 8 Ugandans, and 4 staff members and 1 American. The fellows were from a range of tribal and religious backgrounds, offering a rich tapestry of perspectives that contributed to the learning experience. This diversity was crucial to the program, as it allowed for the exploration of tribalism and differences in an authentic and immersive way. The participation of fellows from Uganda marked a crucial step in building regional synergies. The fellows included two young Maasais, five Luos, one Nubian, one Ameru, one Kamba, two Kikuyus, six Luhyas, one American, and eight Ugandans. The Nubian fellow was the only Muslim participant.

## **The Fellowship Experience**

The staff (Charles, Mercy and Faith) who were all CEDAR fellows from the previous school in Uganda were pivotal in engaging the discussions for a local audience. Both of them had knowledge of the school and what was required to be done to make it a success. Several community organizers—Luciah, Ramtu, Nyongesa, Orete, and Wilberforce—played a key role, as they were already leaders in their communities. Additionally, notable participants included Rev. Martin, an Anglican priest, and representatives from ICAK (Nathan, Henry, and Judy), who brought decades of community service experience and notable individuals like Dr. Odinga, Irene, Lavender, Karemi, Joel and Tayiana also attended, expressing interest in the pedagogy. The eight fellows from Uganda—Ruth, Barigye, Edgar, Eugene, Naris, Catherine, Wence and Jimmy brought an invaluable cross-border perspective, especially in relation to Uganda's unique history of political upheaval, ethnic tension, and attempts at national reconciliation. Their experiences of living in a country that has faced similar issues of tribalism and exclusion added depth to discussions. They shared insights on how Uganda has navigated social integration, and inter-ethnic conflicts, providing lessons that resonated with their Kenyan counterparts. The American fellow who was also the key sponsor of the program brought an international perspective to the conversations on identity and belonging, broadening the discussions to include cross-cultural comparisons on how different nations tackle tribal and ethnic challenges. He offered a unique outsider's perspective, offering comparative insights from the United States, particularly regarding the intersection of race, identity, rights. He also facilitated discussions on the global relevance of the CEDAR

pedagogy, emphasizing the universality of the issues being addressed at the school. Each person's contribution helped frame the conversations within a broader, global discourse on identity and belonging, while also acknowledging the distinct cultural and historical factors at play.

### **Objectives of the Program**

- To provide fellows with tools to address tribalism and promote unity.
- To create a platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences related to differences in tribal, cultural, and religious identities.
- To apply the CEDAR pedagogy in real-life community organizing and development projects.
- To develop a framework for integrating farming and other communal activities into the learning process as a means of fostering cooperation and building relationships.

### **Key Program Activities**

Fellows were engaged in a rigorous schedule that included deconstruction sessions, facilitation prompts, community discussions, and farming activities. Working on the farm became one of the highlights of the program, where fellows collaborated in planting crops, sharing farming techniques, and reflecting on the significance of communal labor. This experience proved essential in bringing the group together and underscoring the importance of practical engagement in building relationships across differences.

#### **Day 1 (August 2nd - Arrival)**

- Fellows arrived in the evening.
- Welcoming of the fellows.

#### **Day 2 (August 3rd)**

- Introduction session: KPPC Director shared their personal story of attending a CEDAR fellowship in 2019 and the beginning of understanding the Pedagogy. Adam introduced CEDAR and its 25-year history.
- Presentation by Dr. Odinga on "Understanding Belonging, Tribalism, and Identity in Kenya,".
- Facilitation session: Fellows shared stories about a time they didn't feel like they belonged.
- Work on the farm: Fellows divided into three groups (slashing, digging, fencing), sharing tools among themselves.
- Post-election violence movie: Highlighting the 2007-2008 election violence in Kenya.

#### **Day 3 (August 4th)**

- Reflection on the post-election violence movie. Fellows acknowledged the severity of tribalism in Kenya.
- Walk to Oloosuyian Catholic Church for a service.
- Presentation by Dr. Bett on "Historical Context of Violence in Kenya."

- Discussion on Rule 1: "Boundaries connect as well as divide."
- Bonding exercise and storytelling about Luo cultural practices related to death and burial.

#### **Day 4 (August 5th)**

- Housekeeping and deconstruction: Fellows discussed their church visit.
- Trip to Kibra slums: Guided by two fellows, the group learned about tribalism's impact in Kibra.
- Visits to two locations in Kibra: Silanga and Kwa DC, where locals spoke about tribal division and daily life in the slum.
- Visit to KICC for a rooftop view of Nairobi.
- Late return to campus due to traffic; second discussion on Rule 5 was skipped.

#### **Day 5 (August 6th)**

- Fellows reflected on their Kibra trip during deconstruction.
- Trip to a Maasai manyatta homestead in Maili Tisa near Namanga; a challenging 4 km walk.
- Session with the Maasai community, followed by facilitation on stories of feeling uncomfortable in a community of belonging.
- Discussion on Rule 4: "Distinguish beliefs from experience."

#### **Day 6 (August 7th)**

- Planned trip to Lari in Kiambu canceled as the Kikuyu council of elders was unavailable.
- Presentation by Dr. Odinga on "Impact of Tribalism on Political, Social, and Economic Lives."
- Facilitation on stories of trust and a presentation on Rule 5.
- Discussion on Rule 6: "All understandings are only partial."
- Evening farm work: Digging, fencing, slashing.

#### **Day 7 (August 8th)**

- Deconstruction session led by Adam on understanding differences.
- Post-election violence photo exhibition and video at the KPPC community gallery. One fellow from Uganda skipped the session due to emotional sensitivity.
- Story of Christian-Muslim conflicts during post-election violence.
- Facilitation session on excluding someone from a group.
- Evening farm work: Planting, watering, and mulching.
- Session on Luyha songs and dancing.

#### **Day 8 (August 9th)**

- Adam led a deconstruction session on exclusion and inclusion.
- Discussion on Rule 7: "Uncomfortable is not Unsafe."
- Scheduled Sip and Paint session canceled due to trainer's absence.

- Farm work: Watering, fencing, mulching.
- Football match: Fellows divided into two teams; some acted as cheerleaders.

#### **Day 9 (August 10th)**

- Morning discussion on differences, revisiting LGBTQ topics from a previous session.
- Presentation by Abisai Mugata on "Rituals and Trust in the African Perspective."
- Discussion on Rule 9: "Allow experience to precede judgment."
- Session on Kikuyu songs and dancing.
- Yoga session.
- Focus group discussion on ethnic cleansing led by Nathan Ambunya.
- Evening bonfire storytelling session.

#### **Day 10 (August 11th)**

- Adam led a deconstruction session on "Margins and Boundaries."
- Free time for fellows to organize their belongings.
- Facilitation on crossing boundaries and its consequences.
- Discussion on Rule 10: "Negotiable and non-negotiable."
- Free time due to cancellation of quail catching activity.
- Meeting between Adam, Barigye, and user to discuss future collaboration between Kenya and Uganda under CEDAR.
- Presentation by Edwine Otieno on "Misconceptions of Kenyan Tribes."

#### **Day 11 (August 12th)**

- Deconstruction session led by Adam on boundaries.
- Facilitation session on crossing boundaries.
- Discussion on Rule 10.
- Free time due to canceled quail catching session.
- Meeting about the future of CEDAR in East Africa.
- Presentation by Edwine Otieno on "Misconceptions of Kenyan Tribes."

#### **Day 12 (August 13th - Final Day)**

- Morning deconstruction and recap session.
- Fellows had free time due to the cancellation of the art activity.
- Discussion on Rule 8: "Knowledge for not knowledge of."
- Group and individual evaluation of the program led by Nathan Ambunya.
- Fellows received participation certificates.
- Closing remarks by Adam and user, followed by expressions of appreciation from fellows.

#### **Day 13 (August 14th - Departure)**

- Fellows took breakfast together and departed.

## **STRUCTURAL FLAWS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Although the first KPPC school was a resounding success, several structural challenges emerged that will need to be addressed in future iterations of the program. These challenges, while minor, provided important learning points for both KPPC and CEDAR.

### **Breach of Confidentiality**

One of the most critical issues occurred during a deconstruction session when a fellow encouraged another participant to share a deeply personal story with the entire school. This action violated the rule of group confidentiality, which is fundamental to building trust in a facilitation setting. In future programs, stricter guidelines and clearer communication of the rules will be necessary to ensure that participants feel safe and respected within their groups.

### **Lack of Group Cohesion**

Another major challenge was the failure to create a strong sense of group identity among the fellows. While the participants gained significant cognitive knowledge of the CEDAR pedagogy, they often viewed themselves as individuals rather than as part of a collective team. This lack of cohesion was evident in several instances, including an incident at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC), where one fellow was questioned by security because he had failed to display his group badge.

In retrospect, it was clear that team-building exercises were insufficient to foster a sense of unity among the participants. Travel-based activities, which are often used to promote group dynamics, were not fully incorporated into the schedule. Moving forward, KPPC will prioritize travel and team-building exercises to ensure that participants see themselves as part of a collective effort rather than as isolated individuals.

### **Missed Interfaith Engagement Opportunity**

One of the more disappointing structural issues was the failure to secure a visit to the nearby mosque. While the fellows were able to attend a Catholic church service on Sunday, negotiations to visit the mosque were unsuccessful. This was a missed opportunity for the participants to engage with religious differences firsthand, a key aspect of the CEDAR pedagogy. Efforts will be made in future programs to ensure that fellows have access to diverse religious spaces to foster a deeper understanding of interfaith dialogue.

### **Travel and Time Management Issues**

Travel logistics also presented challenges that affected the program's schedule. The fellows often arrived late to the KPPC campus, which resulted in the cancellation of several planned activities. This issue highlighted the need for better time management and the avoidance of scheduling important sessions on travel days. Moving forward, travel days will be designated solely for transit to ensure that no crucial activities are disrupted.

## **SUCSESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

Despite these challenges, the KPPC school had several key successes that are worth highlighting.

### **Engagement of Ugandan Fellows**

The inclusion of eight Ugandan fellows was one of the most significant achievements of the program. Their participation was a major step toward fostering regional collaboration in East Africa. The Ugandan fellows brought a unique perspective to the discussions, and their contributions enriched the overall learning experience for all participants. This engagement with Uganda also opened the door for future partnerships, as KPPC and KSD are now exploring ways to work together to train more fellows from across East Africa in the CEDAR pedagogy.

### **Farming Activities as a Group Exercise**

One of the unexpected successes of the program was the incorporation of agricultural activities. Although not originally part of the curriculum, farming together proved to be a powerful team-building exercise. The physical labor involved in planting seeds and tending to crops provided an organic setting for conversations and relationship-building among the fellows. This activity demonstrated the importance of communal labor in fostering group dynamics and will likely be included in future iterations of the school.

### **Practical Application of the Pedagogy**

One of the primary goals of the KPPC school was to ensure that participants not only learned the CEDAR pedagogy but also began to think about how to implement it in their own communities. This goal was achieved, as several fellows began drafting strategic plans for how they would incorporate the pedagogy into their community organizing work. Notably, Luciah took the lead in developing a plan to apply the principles of CEDAR to her work with marginalized groups.

### **Documentation for Future Advocacy**

The comprehensive documentation of the program, including photos and notes from the sessions, will be invaluable in preparing reports and sharing the outcomes of the school with NGOs, donors, and other stakeholders. This documentation will also help build a case for future funding and support as KPPC continues to expand its reach across East Africa.

## **DYNAMICS OF THE PROGRAM**

The theme of the school, “Engaging Tribalism to Build a Vibrant Civil Society in Kenya,” resonated deeply with the participants. All discussions, deconstruction sessions, and facilitation efforts aligned well with this theme, although some of the lecturers failed to meet expectations. It became clear that future lecturers must spend more time with the fellows beforehand to better understand the program's requirements.

Deconstruction sessions presented a familiar challenge—creating themes in real time—but the facilitators worked closely with Adam to ensure successful sessions on topics like boundaries, exclusion, and inclusion. Adam's guidance was critical, but there is a recognized need for the staff to step into more leadership roles to handle such sessions independently in the future.

Facilitation prompts, centered on belonging and identity, were well-received. The prompts included stories of exclusion, trust, shame, and boundaries, enabling fellows to explore personal experiences in relation to the program’s overarching themes.

Discussion sessions, based on the text “Boundaries and Community – Rules for Re-engagement,” were another critical element of the school. Fellows read and discussed selected rules, which facilitated a deeper understanding of living with differences. To contextualize these discussions for East Africa, fellows were tasked with noting local illustrations, which will be used to adapt the text for future schools.

## **THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS AND FACILITATION**

The KPPC school focused on several key thematic areas related to tribalism, exclusion, and identity. These themes were explored through a variety of facilitation exercises, deconstruction sessions, and group discussions. The goal was to provide fellows with both a cognitive and practical understanding of these issues, enabling them to apply the CEDAR pedagogy in real-world settings.

### **Deconstruction Sessions**

Deconstruction sessions were a core component of the program, providing fellows with the opportunity to unpack complex themes such as trust, boundaries, and shame. These sessions were initially challenging, as facilitators had to create themes in real-time based on the participants' contributions. However, through close collaboration between Adam, the lead facilitator, and the other facilitators, the sessions ultimately succeeded in fostering deep reflection and discussion.



## Textual Analysis

The text *Boundaries and Community – Rules for Re-engagement* was used as a foundational reading for the fellows. Participants engaged in interactive discussions about the text, contextualizing its lessons for the East African

## Achievements and Lessons Learned

1. **Inter-tribal Engagement:** The program successfully brought together participants from diverse tribal backgrounds, enabling them to break down barriers and understand one another's experiences. The field visits and practical farm work fostered unity and collaboration, transcending tribal differences.
2. **Addressing Sensitive Issues:** Discussions around **tribalism, exclusion, and LGBTQ+ inclusion** provided crucial learning opportunities for the fellows, helping them grapple with uncomfortable differences in a productive manner.
3. **Community Engagement:** Visits to Kibra slum and a Maasai manyatta offered practical insights into how tribal divisions manifest in both urban and rural Kenya, reinforcing the need for community-based interventions.
4. **Cultural Exchange:** Sessions on traditional songs, dances, and rituals were highly participatory and allowed fellows to celebrate Kenya's diverse heritage. This fostered a sense of shared identity among participants.
5. **Farm Work as a Tool for Bonding:** The farm work sessions were essential in promoting cooperation and community building, demonstrating that shared physical labor can transcend tribal and social divides.

## Recommendations for Future Programs

1. **More Practical Sessions:** Participants valued the hands-on aspects of the program, such as farm work and community visits. Future programs should include even more practical activities that engage fellows physically and mentally.
2. **Focused Presentations:** Some presentations lacked depth in addressing key issues, as noted in feedback regarding Dr. Odinga's session. More targeted presentations on identity and tribalism are needed in future programs.
3. **Enhanced Tools and Resources:** The farm activities highlighted a shortage of tools. Adequate resources should be provided in future to ensure smoother execution of such tasks.
4. **Emotional Sensitivity:** Some content, such as the post-election violence exhibition, was emotionally overwhelming for participants. Future programs should ensure that support systems are in place to help participants process such heavy material.
5. **Phone Use Policy:** Implement a structured policy that allows for communication during designated times without distracting from the fellowship experience.
6. **Pre-program Preparation for Lecturers:** Invite lecturers to join the fellows before their presentations to ensure they are in sync with the program's objectives.
7. **Increased Community Visits and Travel:** Extend the program's travel component to enhance fellows' contextual understanding of Kenya's diverse communities and issues.

8. **Continued Integration of Farming Activities:** Retain the farming component as a key aspect of the fellowship, as it fosters a sense of community and shared purpose.

## CONCLUSION

The first KPPC school in Kenya was a resounding success, despite the logistical and structural challenges. It provided invaluable lessons for both KPPC and CEDAR on how to run such programs more effectively in the future. The participation of Ugandans was particularly important in building synergies across East Africa, and the school served as an important platform for training individuals, community organizers, and leaders in the CEDAR pedagogy.

As CEDAR transitions into its third phase—moving from learning and teaching to practicing the pedagogy—the KPPC center has positioned itself as a key hub for practical application. Community organizers who attended this school have already begun drafting strategies to incorporate the pedagogy into their work, ensuring that the knowledge gained here will have a long-lasting impact.

Looking ahead, KPPC and KSD are working on ways to engage more East African fellows and continue training individuals on the CEDAR pedagogy. This first school was just the beginning, laying the foundation for what promises to be a transformative movement toward building a more inclusive and cohesive civil society in Kenya and beyond.