

Theme: “Bridging the Political Divide: Community or State?”

August 22nd – 4th September



INSIDE, WE TALK ABOUT:

- Program overview
- CEDAR Pedagogy
- Journey Highlights
- Fellows' voice
- Shared experiences and confrontations
- Fellows' Presentations – Knowledge Sharing in Action
- Community Partnerships
- Photo gallery
- Collective reflections and lessons learnt
- Way forward/ Next steps
- Acknowledgments & Gratitude

Building and sharing the Cognitive, Experiential and Affective experiences.

Remarks by the Director

As we bring this year's program to a close, I am deeply inspired by the courage, openness, and commitment each fellow has shown over the past two weeks, Fellows from Kenya, Uganda and Congo. Together, we journeyed through places of history, dialogue, and tradition—listening, questioning, and learning what it truly means to live with difference. The conversations were not always easy, yet they revealed the power of dialogue and the richness of diverse experiences. From rituals and storytelling to lectures and community encounters, each moment reminded us that bridging divides begins with presence, humility, and the willingness to engage. This school has affirmed that the pedagogy we share is not only about knowledge but also about practice—about carrying forward actions that root peace and resilience in our communities. As we look ahead, I trust that the seeds planted here will grow into collective interventions that transform lives and strengthen the bonds that hold us together. Finally, We are grateful to be part of the global CEDAR network, sharing resources, pedagogies, experiences, texts, traditions and of course more fungible resources as well.

With gratitude,
Charles Esibikhwa Edward.

“Fellows Who Participated in the 2025 2nd KPPC Program on Living with Difference”



Fr. Maximiano Ngabirano
Vice Chancellor, St Ignatius
University Kabale
UGANDA



Mr. Athman Ismail, Web
Administrator University
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Mr. Charles Esibikhwa.
Director Kenyan Program on
Pedagogies for Community.
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KENYA



Ms. Damaris Wanjiku,
Customer Service attendant
at Lulu Kitololo studio .
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Ms. Mercy Akeyo, Logistics
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Mr. Edgar Buryahika, Founder
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Mr. Nuwamanya Eugene, an
Assistant Resource Mobilizer
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Mr. Joseph Odoo, Support
staff, Kenyan Program on
Pedagogies for community.
KENYA



Ms. Kosen Naipasoi, Fourth year
student at JKUAT pursuing
Public Administration and
leadership.
KENYA.



Ms. Bevaline Akinyi. A youth
advocate with Bachelor's
degree in Sociology and
Gender & Development
Studies from KU.
KENYA

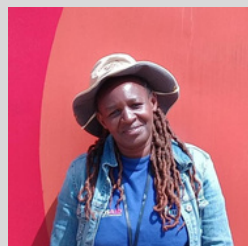


Mr. Geoffrey Omony is the
Executive Director of Youth
Leaders for Restoration and
Development (YOLRED).
UGANDA.

“Fellows Who Participated in the 2025 2nd KPPC Program on Living with Difference”



Mr. Henry Ikatukhu Mpapale, President Institute of Cultural Affairs International (ICAI), East & Southern Africa Regional representative. KENYA.



Ms. Luciah Mwendwa, a community organizer. she has a Master of Arts degree in Project Planning and Management. KENYA.



Ms. Irene Achieng, Community Development practitioner with passion in women and children issues. KENYA.



Ms. Flavine Mandillah, a dedicated social worker from Kakamega currently pursuing her Master's degree in Social Work KENYA.



Mr. Jimmy Obol, Medical Anthropologist and M&E Specialist with 10 years of experience in public health UGANDA.



Mr. Naris Ninsiima He is an Assistant Lecturer – Governance at Kabale University. UGANDA.



Ms. Wambui Joy, Undergraduate at JKUAT pursuing Bachelor of science in Economics. KENYA.



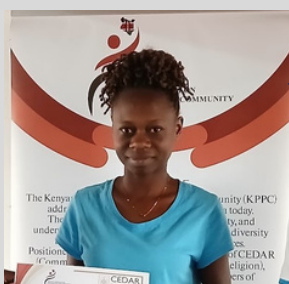
Mr. Ramtu Abdallah Kutembela, He is a community Organizer working within Umande trust NGO. KENYA.



Mr. Ali Gasinya, is a grassroots civic leader from Likoni, Mombasa. KENYA.



Mr. Richard Tchimera, a lawyer with a degree in internal public law in 2024. CONGO.



Ms. Irene Lavenda, a graduate with Bachelor of Arts in Community Development from Moi University. KENYA.



Mr.wenceslaus ayebazibwe, Working for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (The UN Refugee Agency) as Assistant Field Officer. UGANDA.



Through the CEDAR pedagogy, case studies, and experiential learning across different communities and historical sites, fellows explored how to reimagine education, leadership, and dialogue for healing and Sustainable development

Program Overview

The Second Kenyan Program on Pedagogies for Community (KPPC), held from August 22nd to September 4th, 2025, convened fellows under the theme “Bridging the Political Divide: Community or State?”

Kenya’s history of political contestation and ethnic division provided the foundation for this year’s reflections. State mechanisms such as the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) have sought to address these divisions, but often struggle to build lasting trust at the grassroots. Historical moments, including the Kofi Annan-led mediation after the 2007 post-election violence, highlight both the strengths and limitations of elite-driven political solutions. In contrast, community-led initiatives, grounded in local realities, have repeatedly demonstrated resilience. Grassroots peace committees, councils of elders, women’s groups, and youth networks have been able to address tensions more effectively by drawing on shared experiences and traditional mechanisms of dialogue.

This year’s program placed Kenya’s experience within a broader African and global context. Lessons from South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Rwanda’s Gacaca courts, and community mediation in northern Uganda enriched participants’ understanding of the complex balance between political structures and community-based responses.

Through the CEDAR pedagogy, case studies, and experiential learning across different communities and historical sites, fellows explored how to reimagine education, leadership, and dialogue for healing and inclusion. The program emphasized that peacebuilding cannot rest solely in the hands of either the state or communities, but must be a collaborative effort that values diversity as a source of strength rather than division.

Ultimately, the 2025 KPPC equipped participants with the tools and reflections to engage constructively with both state institutions and grassroots actors, laying the groundwork for more resilient and inclusive societies

Living Together Differently: The CEDAR Pedagogy

CEDAR (Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion) is a global initiative that redefines how we live in diverse societies. Instead of focusing only on what unites us, CEDAR emphasizes the importance of recognizing, accepting, and actively engaging with difference which include cultural, ethnic ideological, race, gender and religious differences as the foundation for lasting peace. Founded in 2003, CEDAR began as an experimental program in the Balkans and has since grown into an international network spanning Africa, North America, and Europe. Over the years, it has brought together hundreds of fellows from more than fifty countries—Jews, Muslims, Christians, atheists, professionals, youth leaders, activists and

community builders, creating a unique model of learning and living with difference. At its heart, CEDAR offers two-week intensive schools where fellows from diverse backgrounds share time, space, and experiences. They attend lectures, visit communities, explore unfamiliar practices, and engage in hands-on group work. But the most transformative learning happens not in classrooms, but in the everyday encounters—meals shared, prayers observed, differences confronted, and biases challenged.

The Three Learning Elements of CEDAR

- Cognitive – Fellows gain new knowledge through lectures, readings, and structured analysis of cultural and religious differences.
- Experiential – Shared practices, site visits, and group discussions immerse fellows in real-life experiences of difference.
- Affective – By navigating discomfort, building empathy, and reflecting on their emotions, fellows develop resilience and deeper understanding.

The Fellowship Experience

For many fellows, the greatest discovery is that “the other” is not just outside the group but within it. CEDAR brings together people of different faiths, ethnicities, genders, and orientations, and challenges them to build community across those divides. Through reflective practice, small group dialogues, and collective experiences, fellows learn that difference is not a barrier to peace—but a pathway to it.

CEDAR’s vision is bold yet simple: we do not need to erase our identities to live together. Instead, we must reframe boundaries, embrace ambiguity, and create spaces of trust across divides. In doing so, CEDAR shows us how to live together differently in the diverse communities we call home.

“Difference is not the problem—it is the key to building peace.”



Fellowship Highlights

The Second Kenyan Program on Pedagogies for Community (KPPC) was more than a school, it was a journey of shared experiences, deep reflections, and moments of living together with difference. The fellowship unfolded across two main spaces: the KPPC Center in Oloosuyian and the travel across Western Kenya, before returning to Oloosuyian for closing reflections.

KPPC Center Oloosuyian

The first week at Oloosuyian was devoted to creating community through daily practices and shared learning. Each morning began with deconstruction sessions, where fellows reflected critically on prior assumptions and engaged one another across differences. Practical activities such as working in the farm and learning beadwork created space for grounding, while soccer games strengthened bonds across cultures. Evenings often concluded with movie nights that deepened conversations about identity and belonging.

Journey Across Western Kenya

The second week took fellows across sites of memory, resilience, and learning in Western Kenya:

- Dini ya Msambwa – Encountered rituals of rain making and Resistance movement in Kenya's anti-colonial struggle.
- Nabongo Mumia Mausoleum – Reflected on kingship, governance, and Wanga heritage.
- Masinde Muliro University – Engaged in dialogue session on identity, resilience, and community.
- Kango ka Jaramogi – Learned from the legacy of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, a leader of independence struggles.
- Tom Mboya Mausoleum – Reflected on the vision of Tom Mboya and his commitment to unity.
- Abasuba Peace Museum & Ekgiri Dancers – Witnessed cultural resilience and the struggles of marginalized communities on Mfangano Island.

Closing at Oloosuyian

The fellowship ended where it began at KPPC Center at Oloosuyian. In the final days, fellows engaged in collective reflections, shared their learnings, and envisioned practical actions to take back to their communities. Fellows had a moving farewell, including having roasted goat meat. The fellows departed, carrying with them a pedagogy of difference, resilience, and hope.



Fellows' voice

By Flavine Mandilla

Dini ya Msambwa (Religion of the Ancestors) : Where Faith, Culture, and Politics Intertwine

On my recent journey across historical and cultural landmarks including the Tom Mboya Mausoleum, Kango ka Jararamogi, the abasuba people on Mfangano Island and several dialogues on bridging political divide one encounter stood out above the rest, the visit to Dini ya Msambwa.

Unlike the other places I visited, this movement struck me because of its layered history and unique blend of politics, culture, and religion.

A Movement Born in Struggle

Founded in 1939 by Elijah Masinde, Dini ya Msambwa began as a political resistance against colonial rule before transforming into a religious and cultural institution. Masinde himself had roots in the Friends Quaker church at that time led by Mr Ford yet his calling led him to establish something distinctly African an identity that resisted colonial divisions and reclaimed dignity for his people.

The early followers believed deeply in unity, peace, education, and prayer. They built schools, gathered for worship, and resisted the divisive systems introduced by Europeans. Even after imprisonment, Masinde returned in 1935 and continued to register the church, insisting that it was not a movement of war but one of ministry.

Blending Culture and Religion

What makes Dini ya Msambwa unique is its refusal to separate culture from religion. For its followers, the two are one. Healing practices, rainmaking, and the preservation of traditions exist alongside the reading of scripture and prayer.

They believe that their traditions and culture were given to them by the Lord himself. In fact, they trace their spiritual heritage back to Israel and Canaan, linking their story with biblical history.



“The early followers believed deeply in unity, peace, education, and prayer”

Leadership and Legacy

Masinde is regarded as more than a founder; he is an intermediary between God and his people, much like the figure of Jesus in Christianity. His followers believe that, at the appointed time, Elijah will return to lead again.

Leadership within the movement has often been contested names such as Israel, Josiah, and Benjamin are remembered but at its core, succession is not seen as hereditary. Instead, it is believed that the Lord himself will choose who carries the mantle forward. They also have names for their leaders where the head who took over is called the pope and his wife princess. The pope David Barasa Khaoya was chosen by the Lord to lead His people when Elijah Masinde was old and was about to die. He has been leading the people since then, he was around the age of six years old.

Faith that Endures

Today, Dini ya Msambwa is officially registered as a church, but it remains deeply rooted in African identity. Its survival is a testament to resilience born in the fires of colonial resistance, shaped by culture, and sustained by faith.

Visiting this community reminded me that religion, culture, and politics do not always exist in isolation.

In Dini ya Msambwa, they converge to tell a story of struggle, identity, and enduring hope.

Takeaway for me

In our dialogues about bridging political divides and learning to live with differences, Dini ya Msambwa teaches us an important lesson, when people refuse to separate who they are from what they believe, they build movements that can withstand even the strongest storms.



What struck me most was how seamlessly they merged cultural practices with religious beliefs. Beyond the scriptures and narratives they shared, they also demonstrated cultural knowledge that carried spiritual meaning. Despite being deeply rooted in tradition, Dini ya Msambwa holds an official endorsement as a church, symbolizing how intertwined religion and culture can be.

This visit reminded me that faith, culture, and politics are not always separate. For the followers of Dini ya Msambwa, they coexist and reinforce one another and believe that culture was given to them by God. Their story is not only about resistance and survival but also about creativity in shaping a spiritual identity that speaks both to the past and to the present.

About Flavine Mandillah

Flavine Mandillah is a passionate and dedicated social worker currently pursuing her Master's degree in Social Work. With a strong interest in mental health,

By Geoffrey Omony

Strengthening Peacebuilding through CEDAR, a learning experience

Through the CEDAR program, I embarked on a holistic learning journey that intertwined cognitive, experiential, and emotional dimensions. The lectures offered me a wealth of theoretical frameworks and scholarly insights on topics like conflict, hate, tribalism, and politics, among others, which really sharpened my ability to analyze situations critically and apply structured methods in community work. These lessons were brought to life through site visits, where I connected theory to practice by witnessing the real-life experiences of communities and practitioners involved in peacebuilding. From these interactions, I discovered that reconciliation isn't a one-size-fits-all approach; it requires adaptability, sensitivity to context, and a deep respect for the agency of survivors. Working in groups further enriched this experience, fostering empathy, dialogue, and collaboration as I connected with colleagues from various backgrounds and viewpoints. This blend of knowledge, practical experience, and relational learning not only deepened my understanding but also enhanced the emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills crucial for promoting forgiveness and reconciliation in communities affected by conflict.

The blend of knowledge, hands-on practice, and emotional engagement reflects our comprehensive approach to supporting survivors through healing, truth-telling, and reconciliation.

In lectures, concepts only gained significance when we discussed and interpreted them as a group; during site visits, the lived experiences of communities unveiled perspectives that no textbook could ever fully convey; and through group work, I came to realize that my understanding of forgiveness, justice, or reconciliation is never static but always evolving through dialogue with others. I've also learned to differentiate between discomfort and danger. Differences can often make us uneasy, especially when they challenge our long-held beliefs, moral judgments, or worldviews. However, this discomfort can serve as a fertile ground for growth.

In my conversations and group learning experiences, I realized that diving into tough topics, like justice, tribalism, or politics, didn't make me feel unsafe. Instead, it broadened my viewpoint and enriched my sense of empathy. Embracing differences also involves figuring out what can be negotiated and what simply cannot. I learned that while things like preferences, viewpoints, and cultural practices can often be up for discussion, fundamental values such as human dignity and respect are non-negotiable. This distinction is crucial in post-conflict situations where communities need to find ways to compromise without compromising their core principles.



My time at the school (KPPC) has reinforced the idea that knowledge is truly collective, not just individual. What I know and how I know it have been shaped, influenced, and even challenged by my interactions with others.

Continue by Geoffrey.....

What we deem right or wrong, possible or impossible, just or unjust, isn't something we create in a vacuum; it's shaped by our social interactions. For instance, in our forgiveness and reconciliation program, the way survivors define “justice” or “healing” isn't based on a single person's opinion but arises from collective discussions within families, communities, and cultural traditions. Even the lines of what is acceptable or not—like who gets to forgive or what actions need to be acknowledged before reconciliation can happen—are shaped by shared values and social agreements. This collective aspect of knowledge is also clear in how communities develop their fears and desires. In areas affected by conflict, the fear of returning to violence or the longing for peace isn't just an individual worry; it's a shared memory and a common hope. Likewise, moral judgments about perpetrators and victims are often shaped collectively, influenced by cultural stories, religious teachings, and social structures.



So, my experience reinforces the idea that what we know isn't something we hold alone. It's something we create, share, and nurture together with others. That's why our work in forgiveness and reconciliation needs to be rooted in the community, because knowledge, meaning, and healing flourish not in isolation but in the shared spaces of dialogue, storytelling, and collaboration

Finally, this holistic learning experience perfectly aligns with YOLRED's ongoing mission to rebuild communities affected by conflict. The blend of knowledge, hands-on practice, and emotional engagement reflects our comprehensive approach to supporting survivors through healing, truth-telling, and reconciliation. It really drives home the point that forgiveness isn't just a mental exercise; it's a social journey that needs supportive frameworks and open conversations. At the same time, the CEDAR learning emphasized the significance of preventive measures, like embracing our differences, which can often lead to conflict, especially along tribal lines. The KPPC approach offers moral guidance, shared values, and a sense of community that can help prevent future disputes. When you look at it all together, these strategies aren't at odds with each other; they actually complement one another—our reconciliation efforts heal the scars of the past, while community engagement through CEDAR builds the foundation for lasting peace.

I learned that while things like preferences, viewpoints, and cultural practices can often be up for discussion, fundamental values such as human dignity and respect are non-negotiable

About Geoffrey Omony

Geoffrey Omony is the Executive Director of Youth Leaders for Restoration and Development (YOLRED), an organization in Uganda founded and led by former child soldiers to support war-affected communities.

The Human need for Belonging

Human beings are wired for connection. Beyond food, shelter, and safety, one of our deepest needs is the need to belong. Belonging is more than simply being present in a group; it is the experience of being seen, valued, and included for who we truly are. It gives us roots and wings: roots that anchor us in security and identity, and wings that empower us to grow, explore, and contribute.



A strong sense of belonging provides both stability and freedom, offering us a home in the world while enabling us to step into new possibilities. Yet, this sense of belonging does not emerge automatically. It must be nurtured intentionally through relationships, shared practices, and structures that affirm each person's worth.

Foundations of Belonging:

At the heart of belonging lies connection and relationships. People flourish when they feel accepted, cared for, and trusted. Belonging thrives in family ties, friendships, and community bonds marked by reciprocity and mutual respect.

Closely tied to connection is acceptance and inclusion. True belonging means people can show up as themselves without fear of rejection.

It is the assurance that one will not be excluded because of difference, background, or belief. Such spaces nurture equity and celebrate diversity.

Another foundation is identity and self-expression. Communities of belonging create room for people to bring their culture, values, and uniqueness into the open. When identity is affirmed and respected, people feel whole.

Purpose and contribution are equally vital. Belonging deepens when individuals know their presence matters and that they have something meaningful to offer. When everyone has a role, no matter how small, the community itself becomes stronger. Shared meaning, rituals, and values then weave these contributions into a collective story that binds members together.

Safety and stability complete the foundations. People cannot risk authenticity unless they know they will not be ridiculed, silenced, or harmed. Both emotional and physical safety are essential. In addition, beyond safety lies continuity, the assurance that belonging is not fleeting but enduring. Communities that maintain traditions, structures, and consistent care allow people to plant roots and grow with confidence.

The Transformative Power of Belonging:

Belonging is not abstract; it profoundly shapes how people experience life. When it is present, individuals feel safe and secure, free from the fear of rejection.

Communities of belonging create room for people to bring their culture, values, and uniqueness into the open. When identity is affirmed and respected, people feel whole.

They feel valued and accepted, recognized for who they are rather than just what they do. Loneliness is replaced with warmth, comfort, and companionship.

Belonging nurtures confidence and empowerment. People who feel connected are more likely to take risks, speak up, and pursue growth.

Continue by Henry Mpapale.....

It grounds individuals in something larger than themselves, providing purpose and meaning. Ultimately, belonging brings peace, a sense of being at home, in the right place, and with the right people.

Psychologists recognize belonging as a basic human need, just above safety in Maslow's hierarchy. Socially and culturally, it links us to shared traditions and communities. Philosophically, it answers the timeless question: "Where do I fit in the world?" In organizations, belonging means members are not just included, but also respected, empowered, and invited to make an impact.

Building Intentional Communities of Belonging:

Belonging does not happen by chance. It must be built through deliberate effort. Communities that aspire to create belonging must cultivate practices that bring people closer, affirm their worth, and sustain their shared journey.

One essential practice is inclusivity. A community of belonging begins by welcoming everyone warmly, especially newcomers. The way a new person is received often determines whether they feel part of the group or remain outsiders. Warm greetings, open invitations, and rituals of unity, whether a shared meal, a song, or a word of blessing, send a clear message: "You matter here."

Belonging also grows in the soil of relationships.

While large gatherings build collective identity, small, personal connections anchor trust. Storytelling, dialogue, and mentoring allow people to see one another as human beings with unique journeys and dreams. Each story shared becomes a thread in the tapestry of community. Affirming identity and diversity is equally vital. Too often, difference is treated as a source of division. Yet, when embraced, diversity becomes one of a community's greatest strength. Honoring cultural expression, celebrating unique talents, and valuing varied perspectives enrich the whole. Unity, in this sense, does not mean sameness; it thrives on difference.

Contribution and ownership also strengthen belonging. People flourish when they know their presence makes a difference.

Simple acts of recognition, a thank you, a word of gratitude, or a collective cheer, transform contributions into affirmations of belonging. Shared responsibility shifts a community from being "theirs" to being truly "ours."

None of this is possible without psychological safety. Belonging requires an environment where voices can be heard without fear of ridicule or retaliation. Disagreements must be addressed fairly, mistakes treated as opportunities to learn, and every perspective given consideration. Leaders and members alike must model respect.

Finally, belonging is reinforced by shared vision and continuity. Communities are not held together by convenience alone but by shared purpose.



Symbols, traditions, and collective storytelling remind members of the greater mission they serve. Stability, through regular gatherings, enduring practices, and reliable structures, ensures that belonging endures across time.

The Challenges of Belonging:

Despite its importance, building belonging is not easy. Communities are made up of diverse individuals, each carrying their own histories, identities, and expectations. Differences that enrich a group can also create tension. What one person sees as cultural celebration may feel unfamiliar or even threatening, to another.

Continue by Henry Mpapale.....

Efforts at inclusion may clash with long-standing traditions. Perceptions of fairness may give rise to mistrust.

Contribution and recognition also present challenges. Not every effort is noticed equally, and some members may feel sidelined. Safety and trust are fragile; they can be eroded by bias, exclusion, or unresolved conflict. Rules alone cannot guarantee safety, trust must be nurtured continually.

Building communities of belonging is not a luxury. It is the foundation of human well-being and the ground on which peace and mutual flourishing can stand.

Perhaps the greatest challenge lies in living with difference. Belonging does not mean erasing diversity or enforcing uniformity. It means holding unity without demanding sameness, embracing complexity without collapsing into division. This requires patience, humility, and courage, the willingness to sit with discomfort, to listen deeply to perspectives that challenge our own, and to forgive when misunderstandings occur.

Accommodating Living in Difference:

To live in difference is to accept that no community will ever be perfectly harmonious. Differences of culture, gender, generation, ability, or worldview will always exist. The task is not to eliminate these differences, but to hold them creatively.

Communities of belonging can adopt practices to help accommodate difference. Dialogue circles allow members to share their stories, fostering empathy and understanding.

Celebrations of diverse traditions, through food, art, or language, transform potential divisions into opportunities for learning. Mentorship bridges generational gaps, allowing wisdom and fresh perspectives to enrich one another.

Conflict, too, must be reframed. Rather than being avoided, it can be approached as a path to growth.

When handled with respect and transparency, disagreements can strengthen rather than weaken bonds. The goal is not the absence of conflict but the presence of trust and compassion.

The Gift and Responsibility of Belonging:

Belonging is both a gift and a responsibility. It comforts us by affirming that we are seen and valued, but it also calls us to extend the same recognition to others. To belong is to receive care, and to practice it. It asks for patience, forgiveness, and the courage to remain engaged through discomfort.

True belonging is never static; it is a living journey. Communities must continually adapt, reimagine, and recommit to inclusion and care. This ongoing work is not without challenges, but the rewards are profound. When people feel safe, valued, and connected, they do not merely endure, they flourish. Families grow stronger, organizations become more resilient, and societies move closer to compassion, justice, and unity.

Building communities of belonging is not a luxury. It is the foundation of human well-being and the ground on which peace and mutual flourishing can stand. To nurture belonging is to invest in a more humane, compassionate world and one where every person can truly feel at home.

About Henry Ikatukhu Mpapale

Henry is a Community Development Specialist with 25+ years' experience. He is the current president of the Institute of Cultural Affairs International and the National Director of the Institute of Cultural Affairs Kenya.

A journey of hearts and minds towards understanding and Unity

From August 22nd to September 4th, 2025, I had the privilege of participating in the Kenyan Program on Pedagogies for Community (KPPC) fellowship, held at the tranquil Oloosuyian in Kajiado County, Kenya. The fellowship was themed “Bridging the Political Divide: Community or State?”. A timely and vital conversation organized by a passionate non-profit focused on transformative learning through cognitive, experiential and affective pedagogies. I applied to this fellowship seeking to understand ideological differences without demonizing others. More importantly, I wanted to confront my own biases and blind spots, those unseen barriers that cloud our judgment.

Fellows from Kenya, Uganda and Congo came together during the August Summer School to explore how political divides can be bridged both at grassroots and state levels. The KPPC team, affiliated with CEDAR (Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion), created a dynamic space for learning and growth.

The first week was filled with thought-provoking lectures from facilitators such as Rev Fr Prof Maximiano Ngabirano, Mr. Charles Edward Esibikhwa, and fellow participants including Mr. Obol Jimmy and Mr. Edgar Buryahika. What stood out was the inclusive approach, where fellows weren't just listeners but active facilitators.



listeners but active facilitators. This reflected a powerful truth by Jesse Jackson, “Inclusion is not a matter of political correctness. It is the key to growth.” Our guiding text was *Beyond Tribal Lines* by Adam B. Seligman and Charles Edward Esibikhwa. The book taught us that real peace comes not just from agreements but from changing hearts and minds. It urged us to reimagine the boundaries we create and find ways to build more united, peaceful communities.

The fellowship also embraced fun and creativity. We played football, farmed, meditated, did beadwork and enjoyed a memorable sip and paint session.

One unforgettable lecture at Masinde Muliro University (MMUST), led by Dr. Mandila, explored how language and culture shape our perceptions. She shared two quotes that have stayed with me: “Peace isn’t just about agreement signing. It’s about hearts and minds changed,” and “The mind is a battlefield but also a garden.” The fellowship also embraced fun and creativity. We played football, farmed, meditated, did beadwork and enjoyed a memorable sip and paint session. Watching the colors blend on canvases was a vivid metaphor for peace. Peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of understanding, creativity and connection. Our journey took us to significant cultural sites. At Dini ya Msambwa in Bungoma, we were warmly welcomed by Pope David and Princess Margaret, whose organization bravely challenges cultural norms. This encounter sparked a phrase among fellows: “Mambo ya Culture” recognizing culture’s powerful role in both division and unity. We also visited the Kang'o Ka Jaramogi Mausoleum in Bondo, the Nabongo Mumia Mausoleum and Cultural Center in Kakamega, and the Tom Mboya Mausoleum on Rusinga Island.

Continue by Oloo Irene.....

These sites honor Kenya's leaders, preserve cultural narrative and educate the public while nurturing national pride. One curator's description of Tom Mboya as "a white man in dark skin with a white man's brain" sparked intense reflection. This phrase exposes harmful racial stereotypes still entrenched in society, reminding us how far we must go to dismantle race-based biases and foster true understanding. Visiting the Abasuba Community Peace Museum on Mfangano Island was deeply moving. Reaching the island itself required a waterbus ride and wading through shallow waters, an adventure that underscored the community's fragile position. The Abasuba people are on the brink of extinction, yet their dedication to preserving language, culture and traditions is a beacon of resilience and hope. In the final days, we turned ideas into action plans tailored for East Africa's local contexts. Through individual work, group discussions and collective dialogue, we crafted strategies that could transform KPPC's outreach and impact.

From the fellowship, I learned that political divides are more than ideological disagreement. They affect social, cultural and personal relationships. Addressing them requires multi-level approaches: dialogue and inclusive policies politically, celebrating diversity and acknowledging past grievances culturally, encouraging community engagement socially and practicing empathy and active listening personally.

This fellowship reshaped how I view peace and conflict. Peace is not a fixed destination but a continuous process of understanding and connection. I gained academic insights and personal growth, learning to confront my biases and embrace difference with compassion.

This experience will guide my future studies and career, equipping me to bridge divides and foster unity. More than that, I formed lasting bonds with fellow peacebuilders, a network committed to dialogue and transformation

.The KPPC Academic School 2025 was more than an educational program. It was a journey of the heart and mind. I'm deeply grateful to the organizers and fellow participants who created a space where inclusion, dialogue and hope thrive. Bridging divides begins with each of us through empathy, respect and the courage to change.

About Oloo Irene Lavenda

Irene is an graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Community Development from Moi University. She also has a certificate in Basic IT concepts from Shalom IT.

By Tchimera Richard
(Written in French)

LE RÔLE DU DROIT DANS LA PROMOTION DU VIVRE-ENSEMBLE PACIFIQUE

Introduction

« La beauté se trouve dans la différence », écrit Tahar Ben Jelloun. Pourtant, l'histoire humaine nous enseigne que la coexistence entre personnes d'origines, de croyances et de cultures diverses est souvent semée d'embûches. Du conflit entre Hema et Lendu en Ituri (RDC), au génocide des Tutsi au Rwanda, en passant par les tensions post-électorales entre Kikuyu et Kalenjin au Kenya, ou encore les croisades sanglantes exercées au nom de la religion — les exemples abondent et témoignent de la fragilité du vivre-ensemble. Ces tragédies ne sont qu'une infime partie d'un vaste océan de violences identitaires. Face à ce constat, une question s'impose : Comment le Droit peut-il contribuer à bâtir une société où la diversité ne mène pas à la division, mais à l'harmonie ?

Continue by Tchimera Richard.....

IAvant d'entrer dans le cœur de notre réflexion, il est indispensable de clarifier les deux piliers conceptuels de notre sujet : le Droit et le Vivre-ensemble.

Le Droit :

Dans le cadre de notre analyse, nous retiendrons le sens objectif du Droit. Il s'agit de l'ensemble des règles juridiques qui organisent la vie en société et qui sont sanctionnées par la puissance publique. Ces règles ne sont pas de simples recommandations morales : elles ont force obligatoire et visent à encadrer les comportements pour garantir l'ordre, la justice et la paix sociale.

Le Droit est donc à la fois un outil de régulation et un instrument de protection. Il définit ce qui est permis, ce qui est interdit et ce qui est puni. Il est le socle sur lequel repose toute société organisée.

Le Vivre-ensemble :

Le vivre-ensemble, quant à lui, est une notion plus souple, mais tout aussi fondamentale.

Il désigne la volonté et la capacité des individus aux origines, croyances, opinions ou cultures différentes à coexister pacifiquement. C'est une dynamique qui repose sur le respect mutuel, la tolérance, le dialogue et la reconnaissance de l'autre dans sa singularité.

Le vivre-ensemble ne signifie pas l'uniformité, mais l'harmonie dans la diversité. Il suppose que les différences ne soient pas des barrières, mais des ponts.

Ces deux concepts, bien que distincts, sont étroitement liés. Le Droit peut être le garant du vivre-ensemble, à condition qu'il soit conçu et appliqué dans un esprit d'équité, d'inclusion et de respect des diversités. C'est cette articulation que nous allons explorer dans les parties suivantes.

Le Droit Comme Garant De La Paix Sociale

Dans toute société, la paix ne se décrète pas, elle se construit. Et le Droit en est l'architecte principal. En fixant des règles claires, impersonnelles et obligatoires,



il permet de canaliser les tensions, de prévenir les conflits et d'offrir des mécanismes de résolution lorsque ceux-ci éclatent.

Prenons l'exemple des juridictions nationales et internationales : elles incarnent cette volonté de substituer la vengeance privée par une justice institutionnelle.

Au lieu que les individus règlent leurs différends par la force, le Droit leur offre un cadre légal pour faire valoir leurs droits et obtenir réparation. C'est ainsi que la paix sociale devient possible.

Conclusion

Le Droit, lorsqu'il est juste, équitable et respecté, peut devenir un puissant levier pour bâtir une société où la diversité n'est pas une menace, mais une richesse.

Le droit comme outil d'inclusion et de respect de la diversité

Le vivre-ensemble ne se limite pas à l'absence de conflit. Il suppose aussi la reconnaissance de l'autre dans sa dignité, sa culture, sa foi, sa langue. Et c'est là que le Droit révèle une autre facette : celle d'un outil d'inclusion. Les lois antidiscriminatoires, les politiques de protection des minorités, les droits des peuples autochtones ainsi que les conventions internationales relatives aux droits humains constituent des dispositifs juridiques essentiels visant à garantir que personne ne soit exclu du tissu social en raison de sa différence.

Continue by Tchimera Richard.....



À titre d'exemple, la Constitution kenyane consacre la liberté de religion à son article 32, illustrant cet engagement juridique en faveur de la diversité et de l'inclusion.

Prenons la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme de 1948 : elle proclame à son article 1^{er} que « tous les êtres humains naissent libres et égaux en dignité et en droits ». Cette égalité juridique est le socle sur lequel peut se bâtir une société inclusive.

Ces deux concepts, bien que distincts, sont étroitement liés. Le Droit peut être le garant du vivre-ensemble, à condition qu'il soit conçu et appliqué dans un esprit d'équité, d'inclusion et de respect des diversités.

Dans les États multiculturels, le Droit peut même aller plus loin en reconnaissant des droits spécifiques à certaines communautés : droit à l'enseignement dans la langue maternelle, droit aux pratiques religieuses, droit à la représentation politique. Ces mesures ne divisent pas, elles unissent, car elles permettent à chacun de se sentir respecté et intégré.

Le Droit devient alors un langage commun, une grammaire du respect mutuel.

Les limites du droit et les conditions de son efficacité

Mais soyons lucides : le Droit n'est pas une baguette magique. Il ne suffit pas d'écrire de belles lois pour que le vivre-ensemble devienne réalité. Encore faut-il que ces lois soient appliquées, respectées, et surtout, portées par une volonté politique sincère.

Dans de nombreux pays, les textes juridiques sont progressistes, mais leur mise en œuvre est entravée par la corruption, l'impunité ou l'instrumentalisation du Droit à des fins politiques. Le Droit peut alors devenir un outil d'exclusion, voire de répression.

De plus, le Droit ne peut pas tout régler. Il ne peut pas imposer la tolérance, ni forcer les cœurs à s'ouvrir. Il doit être accompagné d'une éducation à la citoyenneté, d'un dialogue interculturel, d'une mobilisation collective pour déconstruire les préjugés et au finish promouvoir l'empathie.

Le vivre-ensemble est une œuvre collective. Le Droit en est le cadre, mais les citoyens en sont les artisans

Conclusion

Le Droit, lorsqu'il est juste, équitable et respecté, peut devenir un puissant levier pour bâtir une société où la diversité n'est pas une menace, mais une richesse.

Il garantit la paix sociale, protège les minorités et offre un langage commun pour coexister dans la dignité.

Mais il ne peut agir seul. Il doit s'inscrire dans une dynamique plus large, faite d'éducation, de dialogue et de volonté politique. Le vivre-ensemble ne se décrète pas, il se cultive. Et le Droit, bien qu'imparfait, reste l'un des plus nobles outils pour y parvenir.

Le Droit, lorsqu'il est juste, équitable et respecté, peut devenir un puissant levier pour bâtir une société où la diversité n'est pas une menace, mais une richesse.

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About Tchimera Richard

Richard Tchimera is a lawyer from Eastern Congo with a degree in internal public law in 2024. Committed and versatile, He has also done several training courses: in human rights (2021), project management (2022) and climate change (2025).

By Kung'u Damaris

Leadership, Unity and Cultural Pride.

Leadership, unity, and cultural pride are values that have shaped Kenya's history and continue to influence its present and future. This article is my reflection after attending the 2nd KPPC School on living with difference. The experience gave me time to think deeply about our past and present as a country, and how these lessons connect to peacebuilding and the kind of leadership Kenya needs today.

I begin by looking at the leadership of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and his role, together with Jomo Kenyatta, in uniting Kenyans during the fight against colonialism. Their actions remind me of what true leadership and solidarity meant in a time when the country needed unity the most.

His leadership approach and untimely assassination raise questions about the role of inclusivity in leadership and how Kenya can move beyond ethnic divisions. Lastly, I highlight the Abasuba community, a minority group that continues to hold on to its culture and language despite the pressures to assimilate by the Luo and the dominance of national and foreign languages. Their efforts show the importance of cultural pride in building identity and unity.

By looking at these three parts together: political leadership, the struggle against tribalism, and the preservation of cultural identity, I was reminded that Kenya's unity depends not only on leaders but also on communities holding onto their values. These lessons from the past and present invite me, and all of us, to reflect on how we can build a stronger and more united future.

Kango Ka Jaramogi

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga was a prominent leader in Kenyan History. This stood out considering the kind of politics that we have today. During his period Oginga together with Jomo Kenyatta formed a union that was used to fight against colonialism. This brought all communities in the country together and there was no division on which community is superior than the other. Oginga Odinga coming from a Luo community and Jomo Kenyatta coming from a Kikuyu community united Kenyans against the enemy 'Colonialism'.

This brings about a question of is it the community's responsibility to unite the country or is it the government

Embracing this united Kenyans especially when Odinga was offered the position of becoming a president and leading this country when Jomo Kenyatta was arrested and put in prison but turned it down to show his solidarity with Jomo Kenyatta who was the President at that time.

Continue by Kungu Damaris.....

This portrayed leadership qualities that are lacking in the current leadership. This current leadership is focusing of which community is superior than the other especially among Kikuyus and Luos. This has brought a major division among these two communities.

In 2007-2008 post-election violence was brought about division between the two communities. Kikuyus and Luos fought each other since both presidential candidates were from these two communities. Looking back at this proves how leadership dynamics had changed. Unity became a past tense rather than a present tense. Questions that raise include will a country ever unit again? Is there a way our current leadership can focus more on what Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga did for this country? What can be done to ensure that 2007-2008 doesn't repeat itself? Current leadership has been more of division than Unity. This was witnessed during the recent countrywide protests where Kikuyus were accused of causing the protests and all Kenyans rallied behind Kikuyus as a sign of unity against bad leadership. This brings about a question of is it the community's responsibility to unite the country or is it the government. 2024 protests have shown a clear answer in that "Genzs" took to the streets to protest for their demands for be heard by the government about rejecting the finance bill. They all united as youths of the country without identifying themselves from the ethnic groups they came from. They also identified themselves as leaderless because they believed that the cause of disunity in the country has been brought about by the leaders. Despite their difference in ethnicity, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and Jomo Kenyatta united the country against colonialism. It became a state responsibility to unite the country. The current leadership should also focus more on being the source of unity in the country and not division.

There should be a way to celebrate these leaders where it's not seem as if it divides the country.

Tom Mboya Mausoleum 'One Kenya, One People'

Mboya born in 1930, went ahead and became a prominent figure in the fight for Independence and played a crucial role in shaping the nation's future. He never identified himself with his ancestral name because he believed he should be identified by his leadership skills but not his tribe. His slogan 'One Kenya, One People' was meant to eliminate the tribalism that was finding its way into the government. Tom Mboya strongly believed that national unity was important for Kenya especially in its progress and development. He tirelessly worked towards creating a united nation by bridging ethnic divides, promoting inclusivity and ensuring that all Kenyans had equal rights and opportunities. He fought hard against tribalism urging Kenyans to live as one. Leaders of today focus on using tribalism to identify themselves.



Tribalism has infiltrated the Kenyan government. While communities believe that every ethnic group should be represented in government, Kikuyu and Luo have become dominant in the government, the same thing that Tom tried so hard to eliminate.

Continue by Kungu Damaris.....

Tom Mboya was assassinated by a person from a different ethnic group. Till now it has never been clear on why he was assassinated. Was it because of his beliefs in the leadership? or was it because he was uprising as the next best leader in the country? Tom Mboya was highly educated and his leadership approach was different. Was his education viewed as a threat by the government at that time?

What I learnt about Jaramogi and Tom Mboya my question became, from where their museums are, was it for the Country or for the communities where they came from? And does this divide or unite the country? Both of these Museums have been built where they were born whereas they became public figures and prominent leaders of this country. If they were built in different places like Kiambu or Eldoret would that have been pictured as an insult to the Luo community or would it have shown that these leaders were all about uniting the country?

And for Tom Mboya why was his museum not built in Nairobi where he served his people and where he was assassinated?



Due to their localities, it promotes that these leaders, despite their effort to bring peace to the country, are only celebrated more in their respective communities. This is because of accessibility.

There should be a way to celebrate these leaders where it's not seemed that it divides the country. Both these leaders are seen as public figures for the country but are rarely celebrated. The localities of their museums have brought about division in that not all Kenyans can easily access them

In Nairobi there is street named after Tom Mboya but it has seemed to have not gained the momentum of why it was called after him but as a normal street name. current generation barely knows why it was and it should be a government responsibility to keep reminding the country on why such streets are called after specific prominent leaders. This will bring more about unity in the country.

The Abasuba Community

I admired how this community is trying to hold on to their traditions. Westernization is slowly taking over this country by trying to erase the local languages. Most religious places are embracing English and Kiswahili as their languages and forgetting about their local languages. However, the Abasuba community is trying to ensure that their language and culture is not erased. Translating the Bible into the Abasuba language shows how important it is to hold on to our culture. Schools teach us to forget our local languages by insisting that only English and Kiswahili can be read, communicated or written. And that the system of education used is not local. But the Abasuba community is showing that speaking the local language is as important as speaking the two national languages. Translating the bible is one of the steps they are trying to make in order to ensure that their local language is not overtaken or forgotten.

Most of the institutions such as schools are promoting teaching of other languages such as English, French and German rather than embracing our own local languages. Local language is one of the ways of promoting and showing pride in our culture. International countries such as France, Italy and Spain use language such as French, Italian and Spanish in their institutions as a way of identifying themselves.

Continue by Kungu Damaris.....

I In this way their language will inherited from one generation to the next.

However, in Africa use of local language is seen as unethical or a way of showing illiteracy or educatedness in a person. Therefore, instead of a person being proud of his or her community, the person tends to learn these languages that are not our own in order to fit in the community, work place or even a religious place. Its even considered that having learnt additional languages from the western world more of positive than learning a language of another Kenyan culture

Use of these languages have been used as a way of identifying ourselves with our colonialists. If a country speaks French its because it was colonized by French, English because of British. This is slowly erasing our cultural pride since our local language is being replaced. The Abasuba community on the other hand is trying to show that speaking or learning the Abasuba language shows a strong sense of belonging and prideness in their culture. Being one of the minor communities in Kenya, Abasuba community is an important example of how culture is important and should be embraced in Africa and that communities should always be proud of their culture.

About Kungu Damaris

Damaris holds a degree in public policy and Administration from Kenyatta University. She currently works for Lulu Kitololo studio as a customer service attendant.

By Wambui Joy

Beyond the Classroom

It was an amazing experience to pursue the KPPC School. I was eagerly and nervously looking forward to experiencing what lay ahead. I had no idea what to expect but from my very first day the fellows took me in and welcomed me to their fold and that was the last thing on my mind.

One of the best things I enjoyed was meeting new people from different locations and backgrounds. Each person had their own unique and diverse experience and listening to them made me aware of completely new things. Friendships that we formed and collaborations that we shared made the whole experience even more enjoyable and each moment worthwhile.



The training sessions were hands-on and interactive, not academic. I gained much from learning about leadership, communication and self-discipline. Notably, I learned that a lot of development is in the out-of-comfort-zone zone, such as presenting to other individuals, group work, or even voicing my ideas.

In retrospection, KPPC School has had a huge influence over me. It has fortified my confidence, taught me worthwhile things, and enlightened me that learning can be earnest as well as enjoyable and also broadened my network of networks

Continue by Wambui Joy.....

What struck me was the supportive environment. Facilitators were not only teachers but mentors, taking care of us, ensuring that we never felt lacking and stepping in whenever necessary. I also enjoyed the cultural interactions and the fun that we shared, which made the whole experience unforgettable.

In retrospection, KPPC School has had a huge influence over me. It has fortified my confidence, taught me worthwhile things, and enlightened me that learning can be earnest as well as enjoyable and also broadened my network of networks. Most importantly, it has made me a better optimist and resolute individual about the future.

I enjoy the experience, and I will carry the lessons and memories with me for years to come.

About Wambui Ng'ang'a

Wambui is an undergraduate student at JKUAT pursuing Bachelor of science in Economics. She is passionate issues of Gender Based Violence and advocating for human rights.

By Kibwana Ali Gasinya

Peace Has Roots: Coastal Knowledge and Kenya's Future

Why This Journey Mattered

In August 2025, I joined the second Kenyan Program on Pedagogies for Community (KPPC) under the theme: "Bridging the Political Divide: Community or State?"

What I expected to be an academic study turned into a living classroom. From Kajiado's Catholic Mass to the tombs of Nyanza and the shrines of Western Kenya, I encountered a truth that books alone cannot teach:

"In Kajiado KPPC School, civic values are painted on school walls and practiced through faith."

As someone rooted in the Swahili Coast, each stop was not just an observation but a mirror. If Luhya kingship or Luo memory are recognized as national anchors, why are Mijikenda kayas not seen in the same light? The answer is not that kayas are absent, but that they are already working — as models of peace, governance, and ecology.

kenya's unity is not decreed from above. It grows from soil, memory and daily practice.



Knowledge You Can Live

KPPC is not a program of lectures but of practice.

- Cognitive: reading tomb inscriptions, archival records, and liberation texts.
- Affective: feeling grief at Tom Mboya's grave, reverence at Jaramogi's mausoleum, stillness in Catholic Mass at Oloosuyian.
- Experiential: farming at 4pm, crossing Lake Victoria by boat, joining circles of song and ritual.

"Shared labor in Kajiado — peace built through hands-on cooperation."

Even Mass itself became pedagogy — showing that faith and community are not separate from politics, but the soil where peace takes root.

Continue by Ali Gasinya.....

Eight Sites, Eight Lessons

Each place we visited offered not only history, but also a method for imagining Kenya's future:

- Nabongo Mumia Mausoleum showed how councils of elders tied power to genealogy.
- Dini ya Msambwa revealed that prophecy could become theology of liberation.
- Mfangano Island and the Abasuba Museum linked culture with ecology, insisting that no people should be written out of belonging.
- Tom Mboya and Jaramogi Mausoleums reminded us that freedom is an unfinished responsibility.
- Kajiado's Catholic Church and school base revealed how civic values can be taught through faith — and even painted onto classroom walls.
- The daily farm reminded us that peace is built not in conference rooms but through shared labor.



Together, they pointed to one lesson: Kenya's divides cannot be healed by the state alone or by communities in isolation. They require co-creation.

Looking Homeward: The Coast in Comparison

To make sense of what I saw, I returned home — not physically, but intellectually. And I asked: How do coastal traditions compare?

1. Belonging & Identity

- Coast: The Mijikenda kaya forests are sacred settlements guarded by elders, anchoring identity in ecology and community. Swahili towns add a layer of cosmopolitan belonging shaped by centuries of trade.
- Western: At Nabongo Mumia's shrine, belonging is anchored in royal lineage and genealogy.
- Comparison: Coastal belonging is communal and ecological; inland belonging often dynastic. Both serve as stabilizing anchors, but in different registers.

2. Governance & Dispute Resolution

- Coast: Kambi councils within kayas resolve conflicts, tying justice to morality and land stewardship.
- Western: Elders at Nabongo and busaa circles play similar roles in mediating disputes.
- Comparison: Both rely on elders. The difference is that coastal systems integrate ecological stewardship, while inland councils are more lineage-centered.

3. Spirituality & Ritual

- Coast: Islam shapes daily civic life through mosques and madrasas, while kaya rituals tie spirituality to the forest.
- Western & Kajiado: Dini ya Msambwa fuses resistance with prophecy, while Catholic Mass in Kajiado embodies civic faith.
- Comparison: All link ritual to survival and order, but the Coast uniquely mixes global Islam with local ritual, creating a layered spiritual governance.

4. Memory & Monuments

- Coast: Memory is kept alive in ecological and architectural spaces — kayas, coral-stone towns, mosques.
- Nyanza & Western: Memory is monumentalized in mausoleums of Tom Mboya and Jaramogi, or curated in the Abasuba Museum.

Continue by Ali Gasinya.....

- Comparison: Both teach history, but while inland sites rely on monuments, coastal memory is preserved in living spaces still in daily use.

5. Daily Life, Labour & Hospitality

- Coast: Life is built around ujirani (neighborliness), trade, and maritime exchange. Hospitality is woven into Swahili food culture.
- Western: I joined farm work at 4pm and saw busaa shared as a tool of social bonding.
- Comparison: In both, peace is built through shared labour and hospitality. The Coast adds the dimension of maritime trade, while inland practice is rooted in farming.

What the Comparison Shows

1. Same functions, different forms. Governance, memory, ritual, and social repair exist everywhere — but appear as kayas on the Coast, mausoleums in the West, and museums in Nyanza.
2. The Coast ties peace to ecology and cosmopolitanism. Kaya forests, Swahili towns, and Islamic institutions offer plural, tested frameworks for living together.
3. Overlap offers opportunity. Elders' councils, ritual hospitality, and communal labour are shared across Kenya. They are foundations for unity if we choose to build on them.

Coastal Knowledge as National Tools

The lesson I brought home is this: coastal traditions are not “missing” from the national stage — they are already working solutions.

- Where land disputes clog courts, kaya councils have long delivered justice quickly and with legitimacy.
- Where ecology is threatened, sacred forests have preserved both environment and morality.

- Where identity feels fragmented, Swahili cosmopolitanism has shown how diversity can be lived daily.

These are not relics. They are functioning frameworks. If Kenya wants real unity, it must see coastal epistemologies not as folklore, but as active tools for peace.

**KPPC did not give me answers; it sharpened my questions:
How do we build a Kenya that learns from difference instead of flattening it?**

Three Frames for Moving Forward

- Conversation starter: Coastal youth are not asking for recognition; they are offering examples. What if every Kenyan community shared how its traditions solve today's problems?
- Policy signal: Ignoring kaya governance or Swahili cosmopolitanism weakens national cohesion. Inclusion is not charity — it is justice and practicality.
- Voice claim: For me, this journey affirmed a responsibility. As a coastal youth, my role is not only to learn from others but to bring coastal frameworks into national dialogue as equal partners.

Closing Reflection

KPPC did not give me answers; it sharpened my questions:

- How do we build a Kenya that learns from difference instead of flattening it?
- How do we ensure kaya forests, shrines, mosques, and markets are seen not only as heritage, but as living peace institutions?
- How do we let memory guide the future without reducing it to folklore?

These questions are not mine alone. They belong to all of us. And the Coast — with its sacred forests and cosmopolitan traditions — already holds part of the answer.

About Kibwana Ali Gasinya

Kibwana Ali Gasinya is a grassroots civic leader from Likoni, Mombasa, whose work sits at the intersection of youth empowerment, digital inclusion, creative arts and accountable governance. He currently leads ICT and Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Learning (MERL) at Manyatta Africa

By Irene Achieng Obumba

Embracing Difference: Lessons from the CEDAR/KPPC Summer School



Over the course of the fellowship program, we engaged deeply with the complex and often uncomfortable concept of living with difference. Through rich dialogues, shared learning and travels to historical sites, we explored what it means to belong in a world shaped by identity boundaries and to understand the key methodologies of the program that is, cognitive, affirmative and experiential learning.

Re-thinking Identity and Belonging.

We shared deeply about identity, tribalism and the human need to belong. The program created space to reflect on how belonging is shaped by recognition and inclusion, how trust grows when dialogues replace assumptions and how boundaries can be negotiated rather than hardened. The same lines that are made to protect can also exclude. I realized therefore, that belonging is not just legal but emotional and cultural.

Embracing Inclusivity beyond comfort zones.

The other interesting lesson was on discomfort is not the same as danger. Living with difference means learning to stay in conversations that stretch us instead of shying away from them and we looked at the difference between what can be compromised and cannot be as individuals and as a community. We often talk of differences and inclusion, yet many are the times we put limitations to what is “morally acceptable” and “what is not” either to our own individual or societal standards based on beliefs and values.

The same lines that are made to protect can also exclude. I realized therefore, that belonging is not just legal but emotional and cultural.

. I learnt that we cannot limit inclusion only to what aligns with our personal or societal standards. An example is on the LGBTQ identities. This is one topic that surfaced strong emotions and discomfort for many. However, such discussions challenge us to sit with the discomfort not as a threat but as an invitation to listen and recognize humanity in views we may not share or fully understand. Whether it is around gender, faith, ethnicity or identities, inclusivity calls us to listen, accept and be willing to hold space for difference, even when it unsettles us.

When Rights don't guarantee Belonging.

Still on the rule of uncomfortable is not unsafe and having rights is very different from belonging to a community, I learnt a lot from the documentaries we watched. The documentaries unpacked how fear of difference often leads to exclusion even when no real threat exists. A case of the lady living with albinism who is still viewed with suspicion and not treated equally as the rest in her community. She may hold legal rights, yet still living on the margins. Another example was of a gentleman who is Kenyan with Somali origin facing stigma, often judged by association rather than own actions.

Continue by Irene Achieng

These realities reminded me that rights on paper are not enough and belonging is about being accepted and seen as fully human, not just tolerated.



We recognize the discomfort of difference and that what feels unfamiliar isn't necessarily unsafe.

Reconciliation v/s Victim-hood.

As we travelled to historical sites and listening to the shared stories of past conflicts and efforts of reconciliation, we saw the strengths and limits of state interventions. I understood the focus on needs of communities and lived experiences or realities versus the state structures and interests. The program helped in shifting the narrative that communities are not simply resistant or uninformed nor the state always dismissive, instead, both sides have strengths and limitations and both can work together. Both have roles to play and communities can build back trust where it's been broken. In one of our deconstructions on victimhood and reconciliation, some fellows called for forgiveness and moving forward, while some urged the caution against rushing closure and that communities should be allowed to express their feelings and share their pain. Reconciliation and forgiveness do not erase history; however, it holds space for it

Therefore, it is okay for communities to keep the memories of injustice to reckon the peace, otherwise, silence becomes another form of violence.

Moving beyond Stereotypes.

Through our facilitation sessions, we were reminded that every story is partial and that we should move beyond stereotypes and seek more knowledge for than knowledge of to understand living with difference not as a threat but as an opportunity to learn.

Creativity as a Bridge for Healing.

As we also engaged in artistic activities like painting to express the often-unspoken layers of division, hope and healing within our communities. The creative sessions allowed us to process complexity in ways that words sometimes cannot, reminding us that bridging divides isn't just about policies and dialogues but also about human expression, shared vulnerabilities and the courage to see one another differently. Another personal and creative reflection was writing a letter to our younger selves.

It was an opportunity to reckon with how our identities were shaped and the session became a quiet act of healing, honesty and forgiveness towards own self and the world that raised us. The shared meals, shared spaces and the opportunity for fellows to worship together at Oloosuyian Catholic Church despite our different doctrines showed that unity can be lived in simple everyday experiences.

Connection over Division.

In conclusion, the summer school reminded us that while difference can divide, it can also be the beginning of deeper connection that open doors to trust, dialogue and healing, if we choose to embrace it positively. The experience was great.

About Irene Achieng

MS Irene is a community development practitioner with passion for inclusive development. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Community Development from Moi University, Certificate in Asset Based Community Driven Development from Coady International Institute,

Unity woven in diversity

When I first heard about the Kenya Program on Pedagogies for Community, I thought it would be another of those leadership and peacebuilding programs that people attend, get inspired for a while, and then go back to life as usual. I expected a few lectures, some conversations, and maybe a certificate at the end. What I did not expect was how deeply it would transform me. KPPC was not just an event to attend; it was a journey, a mirror, and in many ways a home.



From the moment we gathered, I could sense that this was going to be different. The fellowship brought together people from Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. That alone was significant. These are countries bound together by history and geography, but also divided at times by politics, culture, and painful experiences. Sitting together in one room, sharing meals, exchanging stories—it was like a laboratory of what Africa itself looks like: diverse, complex, and full of both challenges and possibilities. At first, our differences stood out clearly. We spoke differently, thought differently, and even approached discussions from very different angles.

Some carried the weight of experiences from conflict-ridden areas, while others came from relatively peaceful communities. At times, I caught myself wondering if we could ever really understand one another. But as the days unfolded, something remarkable began to happen. We were not just learning theories; we were living the very lessons the program sought to teach us.

It is in those very moments, when our assumptions are challenged and our defenses tested, that we have the chance to see differently, to understand more deeply, and to grow stronger

One of the lessons that shaped me deeply was the idea that uncomfortable is not unsafe. I remember one particular session where the discussion grew tense. The topic touched on identity and politics, and emotions rose quickly. My first instinct was to retreat, to stay silent until the storm passed. But the facilitators encouraged us to sit in that discomfort, to listen even when it hurt, to resist the urge to escape. And slowly, I realized that growth often comes wrapped in uneasiness. It is in those very moments, when our assumptions are challenged and our defenses tested, that we have the chance to see differently, to understand more deeply, and to grow stronger. Another core lesson was about negotiables and non-negotiables. It sounds simple at first, but the more I reflected on it, the more powerful it became. In life, there are things we can compromise on—preferences, processes, even perspectives. But there are also things we must never compromise: dignity, justice, respect. Learning to draw that line, to set boundaries without hostility, was liberating. Boundaries are not about building walls that shut people out; they are about protecting what is essential so that genuine relationships can flourish. That realization alone changed how I think about peacebuilding.

Continue by Kosen Naipasoi.....

What gave these lessons even more depth were the places we visited. The field experiences were like living classrooms, each one carrying lessons that no textbook could capture. When we visited the Dini ya Msambwa community, I was struck by the way culture and religion are woven together there. Before that, I had only heard vague stories about Elijah Masinde, often painted as a radical or even a troublemaker. But being there, walking through their places of worship, and listening to their stories gave me an entirely different perspective. Their shrines were not the grand cathedrals or mosques that I am used to seeing. They were connected to the land and to the ancestors. We saw spaces where sacrifices and burnt offerings were made to God in their cultural understanding. The rainmakers were not just spiritual leaders; they were custodians of culture, keeping alive practices that bind the community together. What moved me most was their reverence for Elijah Masinde, who is not remembered merely as a historical figure but honored as an ancestor whose spirit still guides them.

The field experiences were like living classrooms, each one carrying lessons that no textbook could capture.

And then there was the Zayun Church, where leadership is shared by a Pope and a Princess. At first, this felt strange to me, almost contradictory. How could a Pope, a symbol of religious leadership, and a Princess, a cultural figure, share the same space of authority? But the more I reflected, the more it made sense. Leadership in their community was not about rigid categories; it was about blending roles to reflect both the spiritual and the cultural needs of the people. It challenged my assumptions of what leadership should look like. It reminded me that communities often have creative, unique ways of structuring their lives that we outsiders must learn to respect.

Visiting Dini ya Msambwa was a lesson in humility. It showed me how easy it is to judge from a distance and how important it is to draw close, to listen, and to seek understanding. It reminded me that peace is not about demanding uniformity but about honoring the many ways people find meaning in life.



Our journey then took us to Mfangano Island, home of the Suba community. This visit left a deep impression on me. As we walked through the island and spoke to the people, I could feel both pride and struggle in the air. The Suba are a small community that has faced the risk of being assimilated by the Luo. Their language and traditions are under pressure, but they are fighting to preserve them with all they have. They know that losing their language would mean losing their identity, their history, their very soul as a people.

I was struck by their determination. In a world that often celebrates sameness, the Suba are choosing to resist, not through violence or hostility but through the joyful celebration of who they are. They sing their songs, they teach their language, they hold onto their dances, and they remind their children that being Suba is something to be proud of. That visit taught me that preserving culture is not just about nostalgia—it is about survival, dignity, and peace.

Continue by Kosen Naipasoi.....

Because when people are robbed of their identity, conflict is never far away.

The most emotional visit for me was the Tom Mboya Mausoleum. Even before hearing the story, the sight of the mausoleum was striking. It is built in the shape of a bullet, the same instrument that took his life. Standing there, I felt a heaviness in my heart. Tom Mboya was a visionary leader, full of promise for Kenya and for Africa. His assassination in 1969 was not just the loss of one man—it was the shattering of hope for many people.



Listening to his brother Paul speak was deeply moving. Decades later, the pain is still alive in his voice. He spoke of Tom Mboya not just as a public figure but as a brother, as family. And in that moment, it was clear to me that political violence does not end with death. It leaves scars that live on for generations. The community still feels the wound, and the mausoleum itself stands as a constant reminder. That visit reminded me of the urgency of peace. It showed me how destructive it is when politics becomes a weapon instead of a tool for service. It taught me that our political differences should never lead us to harm one another. They should challenge us, yes, but they should never divide us to the point of bloodshed. Tom Mboya's story is a warning, but it is also a call to action.

It calls us to bridge political differences, to find ways of coexisting like brothers and sisters, and to resist the temptation of allowing power struggles to turn us into enemies.

As powerful as these visits were, the structure of KPPC itself was also a lesson. It was a two-week summer school, but those two weeks felt like a lifetime of learning. What made it extraordinary was the diversity of people who gathered there.

We were not just young students or activists. We were a mix of generations and experiences. There were professors with deep knowledge, older men who carried wisdom from lived history, young students full of curiosity, Gen Z fellows with new energy, corporate professionals with strategic insights, and hustlers who embodied resilience and survival.

At first, these differences felt wide. We looked at one another and saw gaps—gaps in age, in experience, in language, in class. But as the days passed, something beautiful happened. Those very differences became our strength. The professors pushed us to think more deeply. The elders told us stories that anchored us in history. The students asked bold questions that made us reflect. The hustlers reminded us of grit and determination. The corporate voices showed us structure and strategy. We began to see that each person carried something the rest of us needed.

But as the days passed, something beautiful happened. Those very differences became our strength.

By the end of the two weeks, we were no longer strangers trying to navigate differences. We had become a family. We laughed together, wrestled with tough questions together, and supported one another in ways that surprised us. The program ended, but the bonds we built felt unbreakable. That experience taught me something profound: when we decide to work together, our diversity can be a blessing, not a curse. Our cultural, social, and political differences do not have to lead to suspicion, violence, or division.

Continue by Kosen Naipasoi.....

They can become sources of creativity, wisdom, and strength. Instead of seeing diversity as a threat, we can see it as richness. Diversity can make us rich, not poor. It can make us strong, not weak. It can teach us to live as “us” instead of always dividing the world into “us” and “them.” Looking back now, I see KPPC not as a program I attended but as a transformation I lived. It changed the way I think about peace. It taught me to listen more, to judge less, to honor boundaries, and to see discomfort as an invitation to grow. It gave me hope that our societies can learn to coexist despite our differences. And it showed me that peace is not an abstract dream—it is something we can practice every single day in how we treat one another.



As I carry these lessons back into my community, I feel a sense of responsibility. A responsibility to create spaces where people can be themselves without fear. A responsibility to protect the dignity of others while holding firm to my own. A responsibility to build bridges where others see walls. And so, when I reflect on my KPPC journey, all of it—our sessions, our visits, our bonding, our shared laughter and struggles—comes back to one truth that will stay with me forever;

Difference can teach us to live as “us” instead of always dividing the world into “us” and “them.” Looking back now, I see KPPC not as a program I attended but as a transformation I lived. It changed the way I think about peace.

About Kosen Naipasoi Favour

Kosen Naipasoi, a proud Maasai lady and fourth-year student at JKUAT pursuing Public Administration and Leadership. She is passionate about working with communities and creating positive change, and she wants to use her skills to support projects that improve people's lives.

By Bavaline Akinyi

TO BELONG

How two weeks at KPPC changed the way I see difference, connection, and home

On 22nd August 2025, I walked into the KPPC School feeling nervous and unsure of myself. The long journey from Nairobi to Kajiado, and then the bumpy bike ride to the school, only added to my sense of being out of place. I kept wondering if I really belonged there. That first day, I barely spoke, I just observed quietly. But even in my silence, the little gestures from others, a smile, a nod, a simple greeting began to make me feel at ease. Slowly, I realized that I was not alone, and that maybe, just maybe, I was beginning to belong.

At first, belonging felt complicated. Sharing a room with a stranger wasn't easy, and in Bungoma, I had a roommate I hadn't expected to connect with. Yet over time, we grew used to each other. By the time we were moving on to Mbita, I refused a new roommate: I wanted to stay with her. That surprised me: someone I barely knew had become the safe space.

That's when I understood that belonging isn't about how similar people are, it's about connection, trust, and shared experience. The days were filled with moments that deepened the sense of belonging. During facilitation sessions, we shared personal stories in small groups. Each person took a turn opening up about their experiences, their challenges, and their perspectives. Listening, laughing, nodding, reflecting—it all created a space where I felt seen and accepted. Even the fun moments mattered: soccer matches, farm work, and evening bonfires weren't just activities. They were opportunities to bond, to be part of something bigger, and to feel included even in the simplest of ways.



One of the most unforgettable experiences was at Dini Ya Msambwa in Bungoma. I participated in a traditional ritual, something I had never done before. At first, it felt foreign and slightly intimidating, but stepping into it fully allowed me to feel part of a community whose practices were different from my own. That day, I realized belonging doesn't require sameness. It happens when you open yourself to others, listen, and take part in their world. Our visit to mausoleums and cultural sites reinforced this feeling. At Nabongo Mumia's mausoleum, Jaramogi's resting place in Bondo, and Tom Mboya's mausoleum, I saw stories of leadership, struggle, and resilience across generations.

I had a roommate I hadn't expected to connect with. Yet over time, we grew used to each other. By the time we were moving on to Mbita, I refused a new roommate: I wanted to stay with her.

On Mfangano Island, learning about the Suba culture—my heritage, yet so unfamiliar to me, reminded me that belonging can also connect you to your roots and history. At every stop, I found pieces of myself reflected in others' lives, and that made me feel included in a larger story. Even small gestures mattered. Being the bell ringer and the timekeeper in Kajiado earned me the compliments and recognition, and my birthday was celebrated with a surprise cake despite being sick. These moments, simple as they were, reminded me that belonging is felt in attention, care, and shared joy.

Here's the real talk: so many people chase belonging so hard, they end up twisting themselves just to fit in. They think if they wear, say, or act a certain way, they'll be accepted. But belonging should never feel like self-erasure. You don't have to change who you are to be part of something. Before KPPC, I judged people based on their tribe, appearance, or differences. I thought keeping my circle 'safe' meant I'd belong better. But KPPC showed me that belonging isn't about sameness or safety—it's about showing up, being open, and letting people see you for who you are.

That's what the program taught me: sometimes, the people you least expect to connect with become your safe space. My roommate in Bungoma? I didn't expect to bond, but she became someone I didn't want to leave behind. And stepping into new experiences, like the ritual at Dini ya Msambwa showed me that belonging can happen across difference, even when it's uncomfortable.

*belonging is not about sameness;
it's about connection, openness,
and the courage to step into
someone else's world.*

Belonging isn't mandatory. You don't have to belong to anyone or anywhere to be valid. What matters is choosing spaces, people, and moments that accept you fully and also stepping into spaces that challenge you. That's where growth, empathy, and connection live. KPPC taught me that true belonging is earned through openness, trust, and participation, not by changing yourself to fit someone else's idea of 'acceptable'.



Roommates, rituals, shared stories, travels, laughter, and even birthday surprises- they all taught me one thing: belonging is not about sameness; it's about connection, openness, and the courage to step into someone else's world.

About Bevaline Akinyi,

Bevaline Akinyi is a Youth Advocate from Nairobi, currently awaiting graduation with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Gender & Development Studies at Kenyatta University. Her academic journey has been deeply influenced by her personal experiences and the desire to understand people, society, and the systems that shape our lives.

Shared experiences and confrontations

Ritual Chicken at Dini ya Msambwa shrine

One powerful moment of confrontation came during the visit to Dini ya Msambwa. As part of the rituals, a chicken was slaughtered and its blood sprinkled at the four corners of the shrine. The same chicken was then roasted on a fire near the ritual site and later brought to the table for the group to share with members of the movement.

What followed was striking: most fellows refused to eat the chicken, saying it was a “ritual chicken” and that they did not feel safe consuming it. Only two fellows were willing to taste it, while the rest declined. Interestingly, however, they were still comfortable eating other food prepared by the Dini ya Msambwa community.

This moment highlighted how deeply personal boundaries of belief and practice can surface in shared spaces—and how comfort and discomfort shape decisions even in something as simple as sharing a meal



Slaughtering a goat for the fellows.

One of the most meaningful confrontations happened on the last evening at the KPPC Center, during our farewell dinner. A goat had been prepared for the group, but when it came to the slaughtering, the Muslim fellows raised an important concern: for them to eat the meat, it had to be halal, and that meant one of them needed to take part in the slaughter. For them, this was a non-negotiable boundary of faith.

For the rest of the fellows, how the goat was slaughtered was not a fixed matter—it was a negotiable one. After an open exchange, everyone agreed to let one Muslim participant be involved in the slaughter. This compromise allowed the meat to be shared by all, with no one excluded from the meal.

That evening became a living example of how differences can be navigated with respect: what is non-negotiable for one person can still be honored without undermining the rest, creating a space where everyone can belong—down to the very last shared meal.

Sharing of Beds by Fellows

Another confrontation and shared experience emerged during the allocation of sleeping places. At the KPPC Center, fellows were initially relieved to find that although rooms were shared among three or four people, each participant had their own bed.

The situation shifted once the group left Kajiado and began traveling. In Bungoma, KPPC's arrangement required two fellows to share a bed. This created visible discomfort for some, especially with the particular pairings they were assigned. While they accepted it as the procedure, it was clear that boundaries of personal space and comfort were being tested.

Later, when the group traveled to Homa Bay and the same arrangement of room and bed-sharing was announced, something remarkable had changed. Fellows who had earlier expressed discomfort in Bungoma were now more at ease and even confident sharing a bed with the same partners they had resisted before.

Continue on Sharing of Beds

This confrontation, rooted in personal boundaries, gradually transformed into a shared experience of adaptation and trust. It revealed how discomfort can evolve into acceptance when people open themselves to community living and difference.

Tom Mboya Mausoleum Debate

During the visit to the Tom Mboya Mausoleum, a heated confrontation emerged. One fellow, strongly felt that the very design of the mausoleum, shaped like a bullet was problematic. To him, it symbolized sorrow, pain, and hatred, and risked becoming “a recipe for future conflict and civil unrest.” He argued that instead of inspiring healing and unity, the monument kept the community trapped in the memory of violence.

Others disagreed, insisting that the community had every right to hold onto its pain and that remembrance itself was a form of justice. They argued that the state needed to step in, compensate the family, and address unresolved grievances before asking the community to “move on.”

This difference in perspectives exposed the delicate tension between reconciliation and victimhood. As one fellow later reflected, “Reconciliation cannot erase history—sometimes keeping the memory alive is part of reckoning with peace.”



The Dialogue on Biases at Masinde Muliro University

At Masinde Muliro University, the fellows had an enriching session with Dr. Mandilla, a lecturer who guided them through key concepts of dialogue, identity, and resilience. Her teaching on biases, their types and how to live with them sparked a lot of reflection among fellows. The session was both intellectual and practical, and many felt it pushed them to think critically about how biases shape relationships and leadership.

But the real confrontation came during the Q&A session. A fellow from Congo posed a bold question: “If one day your son came home to introduce his lover, and you found out that the lover was gay, what would you do?”

The room went silent. You could see from her expression that this was not a conversation she was willing to enter into. She avoided a direct answer, skirting around the question. For many fellows, this moment was revealing. It showed that even within spaces designed for open dialogue, there are boundaries, topics that remain too sensitive, too controversial, or too culturally charged to be engaged with fully.

This confrontation highlighted an important lesson: while dialogue can expand our capacity to live with differences, there are limits to what individuals and communities are prepared to negotiate. As one fellow quietly observed afterward, “Even in safe spaces, there are non-negotiables. That is also part of learning to live with difference.”

While dialogue can expand our capacity to live with differences, there are limits to what individuals and communities are prepared to negotiate.

Encounter at Oloosuyian Catholic Church

On Sunday, the fellows visited Oloosuyian Catholic Church, a small parish set some distance from the KPPC center. Some walked while others used the transport provided, but all arrived in time for the 9:00 a.m. Mass. The service was structured around readings from Psalms, Isaiah, Hebrews, and the Gospel of Luke, with a message that emphasized living by good values, extending kindness to others, and reflecting on the mission and objectives of the fellowship school.

The group leader introduced the group, giving each fellow a chance to say their name, where they came from, and their religious affiliation. This simple act created its own moment of confrontation. When few fellows introduced themselves as Muslims, the church fell into a brief silence. One Muslim fellow later confessed, “I felt awkward in that moment of silence.”

Another layered confrontation emerged with Max. since the group leader had not introduced a fellow priest among the fellows, he felt the need to do it himself as one. When he mentioned it, the Bishop immediately invited him to sit with him at the front. Later, the fellow reflected, “If I had my priestly gown with me, I would have participated in leading the Mass. Without it, I could only sit and watch like the others.”

For some Catholic fellows, the shared experience was affirming. They participated in the Eucharist and felt welcomed, noting that the ritual made them feel “at home” even far away in a village church. For one fellow, the service carried a different kind of meaning. He later shared, “Being in a village church felt so intimate, it was refreshing.”

This visit revealed how religious spaces can both affirm belonging and highlight difference. The silence during the introductions and the Eucharist participation showed moments of tension, but also opportunities for solidarity.

Deconstruction at Blue Ridge Hotel

During a deconstruction session at Blue Ridge Hotel, one fellow from Congo raised a provocative question that sparked a deep moment of confrontation. He had observed that throughout the program, many fellows spoke passionately about their love for culture and proudly expressed their cultural identity. Yet he could not reconcile this with what had happened earlier at Dini ya Msambwa, when fellows refused to eat the chicken slaughtered in the traditional ritual way.

Standing before the group, he asked:

“If we truly celebrate culture and cultural practices, then why was it a problem for us to eat chicken that was prepared in a cultural way? Why do we embrace culture in words but hesitate when it comes to lived practice?”

The question struck a nerve. For some fellows, it exposed an inconsistency between what they professed and what they could actually accept in practice. For others, it revealed the limits of cultural openness—an acknowledgement that while culture is important, there are boundaries one may not be ready to cross.

This confrontation became a shared experience because it forced the fellows to reflect not only on their own cultural comfort zones but also on the larger tension between appreciating culture from a distance and engaging with it fully. It was an honest reminder that dialogue about identity is not always neat—it can be unsettling, challenging, and necessary for growth

If we truly celebrate culture and cultural practices, then why was it a problem for us to eat chicken that was prepared in a cultural way?

Fellows' Presentations – Knowledge Sharing in Action

As part of the Summer School journey, Three fellows delivered presentations that deepened understanding of Kenya's challenges:

1. **Understanding Belonging, Tribalism, and Identity in Kenya** By **Luciah Mwendwa**

Her presentation unpacked the roots of tribalism, how identity is formed, and the ways belonging (or exclusion) shapes social and political life in Kenya. The framing around “belonging” particularly struck the fellows, as many connected it with their own lived experiences of either being embraced or marginalized within communities.

The group reaction was immediate and emotional. Fellows shared personal stories—one recounted being stereotyped during university elections simply because of his surname, while another reflected on the pain of being “othered” in her own neighborhood. These stories sparked a moving dialogue where fellows openly acknowledged their own biases and privileges.

This activity did more than transfer knowledge, it created a safe space where the group confronted difficult truths together. Several fellows noted that they had never before spoken so openly about the role of tribalism in shaping friendships, opportunities, and political choices. Importantly, the discussion tied back into the school's broader themes of identity and resilience, reinforcing the importance of dialogue as a tool for deconstructing prejudice.

2. **The Limits of the State: When National Interventions Fail – Understanding Bureaucratic Failure and Citizen Alienation**

The session sparked deep and at times emotional conversations among fellows. Many resonated with the examples drawn from Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, particularly when discussing bureaucratic failure and the alienation of citizens. Several fellows reflected on their own lived experiences of feeling excluded by state systems and shared personal stories of marginalization.

The group discussion was robust. Some fellows argued strongly that the state must remain central in peacebuilding, while others countered that true reconciliation and justice can only be achieved at the community level, citing examples of traditional systems like Mato Oput and Gacaca. This created a healthy confrontation of ideas that enriched the dialogue.

3. **Community vs. State: Who Owns the Peace Process?**

This was one of the most engaging parts of the program, not only because of the content but because of the way fellows reacted and built on it.

The presentation introduced frameworks such as the conflict cycle (from latent conflict to escalation and hostility) and resolution mechanisms including negotiation, preventative measures, and ADR. Edgar also contrasted the strengths of community-based practices—bylaws, rituals, values—with state-led processes.

The group's response to this session was dynamic. Several fellows immediately connected the discussion to their own community experiences, highlighting how rituals and shared values often succeed where government processes fail. Others challenged this, arguing that community tools alone cannot address structural injustices without state backing. This generated a balanced confrontation of perspectives, with examples from Uganda, Kenya, and Congo grounding the debate.

The Core Text of the 2nd KPPC School- *Beyond Tribal Lines-Reimagining Communities and Boundaries in Africa.*

In the 2nd KPPC School was *Beyond Tribal Lines: Building Bridges Across Divides*, the central text that guided our learning and reflections. The book became both our compass and mirror, a compass for navigating difference and a mirror reflecting our own assumptions about identity, belonging, and community.

Each day, fellows gathered in reading and discussion circles to unpack sections of the book, connecting its lessons to lived realities of tribalism, politics, and faith in East Africa. The conversations were deep, sometimes uncomfortable, but always transformative. *Beyond Tribal Lines* challenged us to think beyond agreement, to listen more deeply, and to reimagine what community truly means.

Central to the book are the Rules of Reengagement, eleven guiding principles that framed our discussions and shaped the rhythm of the school. They offered both philosophical depth and practical wisdom for engaging with difference, not by erasing it, but by learning to live with it.

The Eleven Rules of Reengagement

Rule # 1 Boundaries connect as well as divide.

Boundaries are not walls; they define relationships and make authentic encounters possible.

Rule # 2 Belonging is not fungible.

Each sense of belonging is unique and cannot be traded or replaced.

Rule # 3 Having rights differs greatly from belonging to a community.

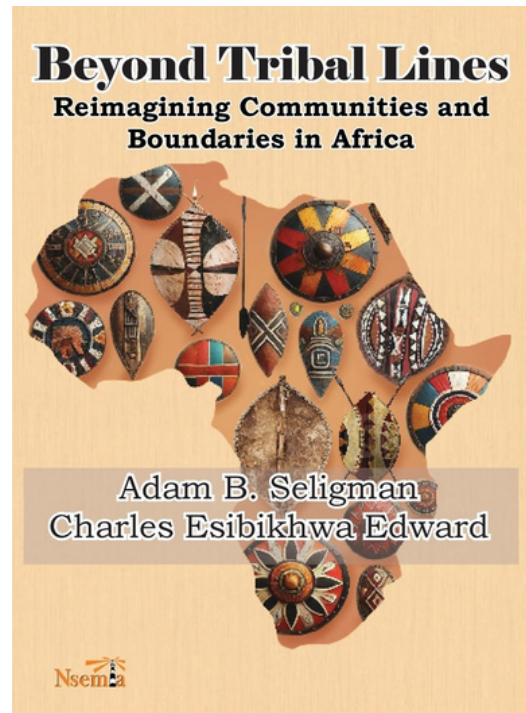
Rights protect individuals; belonging sustains relationships.

Rule # 4 Distinguish beliefs from experience.

Our beliefs shape us, but our experiences connect us — even across divides.

Rule # 5 All understandings are only partial.

No one holds the full truth; humility is the gateway to learning.



Rule # 6 Uncomfortable is not unsafe.

Growth often begins where comfort ends; tension is part of transformation.

Rule # 7 Distinguish between shame and guilt.

Guilt can inspire change, but shame isolates; healing begins with self-acceptance.

Rule # 8 Knowledge for, not knowledge of.

Knowledge should serve relationships, not objectify others.

Rule # 9 Allow experience to precede judgment.

Meaning arises when we first listen, observe, and live before we evaluate.

Rule # 10 What we hold to be sacred is usually non-negotiable.

Recognizing sacred boundaries helps us respect others' deepest commitments.

Rule # 11 There is no monopoly of suffering.

Every community carries its own pain — acknowledging this opens the door to empathy.

Through these rules, fellows learned that living together does not require sameness, but rather the courage to remain in relationship despite difference. The book helped transform theory into practice — shaping the way participants approached dialogue, reflection, and community living.

Funding Partners, Community and Collaborators that made the journey possible

Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion

(CEDAR)



CEDAR

Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion

We are grateful to be part of the global CEDAR network, sharing resources, pedagogies, experiences, texts, traditions and of course more fungible resources as well.

Kenyan Program on Pedagogies for Community

(KPPC)



Affiliate of the CEDAR network. The organization that hosted fellows in the program for two weeks of training, dialogue, and community immersion.

Dini ya Msambwa (Bungoma)



Offered insight into African traditional spirituality through rituals and dialogue with community members and had lunch together with the members

Nabongo Mumia Mausoleum (Mumias)



Provided a historical grounding in the legacy of kingship and traditional leadership of wanga people of luyha community.

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (Kakamega)



Provided a space for a Learning session with Dr. Mandilla on dialogue, identity, resilience, and confronting biases.

Oloosuyian Catholic Church (Kajiado)



The church welcomed fellows into Sunday Mass, offering a spiritual space for reflection, interfaith interaction, and community fellowship.

Abasuba Peace Museum (Mfangano Island)

ABASUBA COMMUNITY
PEACE MUSEUM

Immersion into Suba heritage, culture, and expressions of resilience through traditional dance and storytelling.

Tom Mboya Mausoleum (Rusinga Island)



Here the fellows had Dialogue on memory, grief, and leadership legacies of Kenya.

PHOTO GALLERY



Collective reflections and lessons learnt

From Midway and Final Evaluations

The 2025 KPPC Summer School was not only as an academic and experiential program but also as a transformative journey where participants could reflect deeply on their own identities, relationships, and role of difference. The midway and final evaluations provided rich insights into how participants engaged with the process, the challenges they faced, and the lessons they carried forward.

1. Growth Through Discomfort

From the midway stage, participants realized that discomfort was not a threat but a something to engage and live with. Many reported feeling uneasy during cultural immersions (such as sharing rooms or rituals at Dini ya Msambwa), but these moments became powerful learning sites. By the end of the program, this initial discomfort was reframed as growth:

- “Being uncomfortable does not mean being unsafe; it means I am learning.”
- “What I thought was non-negotiable, I now see can be negotiated through dialogue.”

Lesson: Discomfort, is a catalyst for transformation.

2. Belonging and Identity in Practice

In week one, fellows began to see how personal and collective identities shaped interactions. Sessions on negotiables vs. non-negotiables and the presentation on Belonging, Tribalism, and Identity sparked honest sharing about cultural pride, biases, and boundaries.

By the program's close, participants articulated a deeper understanding that identity in Kenya is fluid, layered, and often misunderstood. Encounters with communities like the Abasuba (whose roots trace to Uganda) challenged fixed notions of tribe and belonging.

- “I realized there is no pure identity in Kenya, we are already deeply mixed.”
- “Living with people from different cultures has taught me that diversity is beautiful.”

Lesson: Exploring identity beyond stereotypes reveals connections that bridge divisions.

3. Confrontation as Learning

The program underscored that meaningful dialogue cannot avoid confrontation. At both the midway and final reflections, participants pointed to key moments of tension:

- The Blue Ridge Hotel deconstruction, where a Congolese fellow challenged others for refusing to eat chicken slaughtered ritually, questioning authenticity in cultural engagement.
- The Masinde Muliro University lecture, where a question about LGBTQ acceptance exposed the cultural limits of dialogue.
- The Tom Mboya Mausoleum visit, where fellows disagreed on whether memorializing pain sustains trauma or preserves dignity.

Initially, these confrontations generated discomfort and even silence. By the end, fellows recognized them as essential to the CEDAR pedagogy:

- “If we had avoided these hard moments, the school would have been incomplete.”

Lesson: Confrontation, when guided, builds resilience and honesty in community learning.

Collective reflections and lessons learnt

Continue.....

4. Community vs. State in Peacebuilding

Across both evaluations, fellows wrestled with the central theme: Who owns the peace process, the community or the state? Early discussions highlighted skepticism about the state's failures, while midway sessions (e.g., Jimmy's lecture on bureaucratic failure) deepened understanding of state limitations.

By the final week, Edgar's presentation on Community vs. State in Peacebuilding and the field visits affirmed that while the state holds authority, grassroots communities often carry legitimacy and trust.

- “The state makes laws, but the community makes peace.”
- “We need both, but communities must be recognized as equal actors.”

Lesson: Sustainable peace requires balance between state authority and community legitimacy.

5. The Power of Collective Living

Midway observations noted that living arrangements, mixed by tribe, religion, and nationality were initially awkward. Fellows struggled with language barriers, religious practices, and cultural habits.

By the final evaluation, those very differences had become bonds. The young generation, in particular, formed deep attachments that transcended divisions:

- “At first, I was anxious about living with someone from a completely different background. Now, I cannot imagine this journey without them.”
- “Differences are not our weakness, they are our bridge.”

Lesson: Shared living is not just logistics; it is pedagogy in practice.

6. Transformation into Action

Both midway and final reflections revealed growing confidence among fellows to take their learning home. What began as personal insights (week one) matured into concrete commitments (week two): community dialogues, interfaith forums, research projects, and learnings.

- “This program gave me the courage to start dialogue forums in my community.”
- “I feel like I have unlocked a part of me I didn't know. I want to do more in my community now.”

Lesson: The KPPC model equips participants not just to reflect, but to act as agents of peace and inclusion

7. Collective Lessons for Future Programs

From both evaluations, participants and facilitators highlighted key lessons for future KPPC iterations:

- Allow more time for debriefs and peer-led reflections after field visits.
- Balance theoretical lectures with interactive dialogue.
- Diversify participants further by including older community leaders alongside youth.
- Provide better logistical support (beddings, multimedia tools, translation).

Support post-program initiatives with mentorship and resources.

The most enduring lesson is that **difference is not a barrier to peace, it is the very ground on which peace can be built, if engaged with honesty and courage.**

Way Forward & Next Steps

As the KPPC Summer School 2025 drew to a close, fellows translated their two weeks of learning into practical community actions. Guided by the CEDAR pedagogy (cognitive, affective, experiential), they identified key societal challenges, proposed interventions, and mapped clear action steps for implementation.

This collective roadmap reflects their determination to turn dialogue into action, confronting negative ethnicity, discrimination, political violence, exclusion, and other issues through creativity, accountability, and collaboration.

Fellows' Action Plan: Issues, Interventions & Next Steps

Issue	Intervention	Pedagogical Approach	Action Steps	Items Required	Who Leads
Negative Ethnicity (G1)	Engage youth on social media, intercommunal youth clubs, music & dance	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Identify young people in schools/universities; form action groups; engage musicians/artist	Organizers, youth leaders, transport, writing materials	Favour, Athman
Negative Ethnicity (G2)	Engage youth on social media, intercommunal youth clubs, music & dance	Affective, Experiential	Identify young people in schools/universities; form action groups; engage musicians/artists	Trained facilitators, venues, materials, transport	KPPC, County Gov't, NGOs, Fellows
Negative Ethnicity (G4)	Engage youth on social media, intercommunal youth clubs, music & dance	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Peace symposiums & debates	Venues, transport, meals, facilitators, media	Eugene
Political Differences (G1)	Engage youth on social media, intercommunal youth clubs, music & dance	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Meet students, establish chapters; engage CSOs for dialogue themes	Team leaders, organizers, materials, transport	Favour, Athman

Fellows' Action Plan: Issues, Interventions & Next Steps

Political Violence (G4)	Dialogue forums	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Seminars, public Barazas, media talk shows, sports	Stationery, allowances, transport, meals, media	Ramtu
Discrimination (G2)	Dialogues	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Awareness creation in schools & communities	Training materials, outreach transport, directories	Fellows, Trainers, KPPC
Discrimination (G3)	Sensitization on living with difference	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Multicultural events & outreach	Social media, collaboration, materials, venues, transport	Fellows, Community Leaders
Stereotypes & Prejudice (G1)	Sports & games, skills training, awareness materials	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Establish community clubs; support social media advocacy	Organizers, training materials, transport	Geoffrey Omony
Stereotypes (G3)	Shared knowledge & multicultural exchange	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Dialogue events & cultural showcases	Cultural attires, mobilizers, bibliographies	Cultural leaders, Fellows
Religion within Tribes (G1)	Sports & games	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Visit & engage diverse religious communities	Venues, interpreters, training materials	Flavine, Henry
Religious Conflicts (G4)	Interfaith dialogue	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Conferences, youth forums, site visits	Venues, meals, facilitators, media	Ramtu
Exclusion (G2)	Strengthening inclusive public participation	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Targeted outreach & public forums	Training materials, venues, transport	County Gov't, Ward Admin, Fellows
Victimhood in Communities (G1)	Dialogue, reconciliation talks	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Target conflicting communities	Organizers, transport, materials	Irene

Fellows' Action Plan: Issues, Interventions & Next Steps

Individualism (G3)	Promote collective responsibility	Cognitive, Affective	Use policies & constitution platforms for dialogue	Advocacy materials, transport, trainers	Facilitators, Group leaders
Poor Allocation of Resources (G2)	Social accountability, participatory budgeting	Cognitive, Affective	Run public budgeting forums	Facilitators, venues, documentation, media	County Treasuries, CSOs
Bureaucratic Failure (G3)	National dialogue with state & community	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Convene Barazas, foster participation	Mobilizers, media platforms	State reps, Fellows
Peace Advocacy (G4)	Dialogue	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Football matches, cultural events, Barazas	Venues, meals, transport, media	Irene Lavender
Land & Settlement Issues (G4)	Dialogues	Cognitive, Experiential, Affective	Seminars, Barazas, site visits	Venues, meals, materials, media	Edgar

The road ahead

Fellows left the school with a shared commitment: to transform their communities by living with difference as a strength, not a weakness.

- Community Clubs & Chapters will anchor community engagement.
- Dialogue Forums will bring diverse communities together for reconciliation.
- Cultural & Religious Exchanges will foster appreciation across faiths and traditions.
- Public Accountability Spaces will hold leaders to inclusive practices.

In their words:

“This is only the beginning. We return to our communities with tools, courage, and a network. The next step is action.”

Acknowledgements & Gratitude

The 2025 KPPC Summer School was a true collective effort, an experience made possible through the generosity, wisdom, and partnership of many individuals and communities. We are deeply humbled and grateful.

We are grateful to be part of the global CEDAR network, sharing resources, pedagogies, experiences, texts, traditions and of course more fungible resources as well. As an affiliate of the CEDAR Network, KPPC is honored to have hosted this two-week journey of dialogue, learning, and transformation here in Kenya.

Our gratitude extends to our partners, Kitara School of Difference, who strengthened regional synergies by ensuring that fellows from Uganda joined the program and Tchimera Richard from Congo who braced the journey to come to the program making this truly an East African gathering.

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Our Team and Fellows

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- And most importantly to our fellows. Thank you for your openness, courage, and willingness to live out the pedagogy of difference. You co-created this space with honesty and heart, and your reflections will continue to echo long after the program.

Our Facilitators and Evaluator

- Luciah Mwendwa, who not only facilitated powerful sessions but also carried the critical role of evaluator, delivering midline and final reports that will serve as a roadmap for KPPC's next steps.
- Obol Jimmy, who challenged us to reflect on the limits of the state.
- Edgar Kavindi, who helped us wrestle with ownership of peace processes.
- Father Maximiano Ngabirano, whose humility and wisdom enriched the fellows' learning on deconstruction and reflection.

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- The founding member of Dini ya Msambwa, David Akhaoya "The Pope", and his wife Margaret "The Princess", who not only opened their home to the fellows but also shared the rich history and teachings of the movement—capping it with a meal shared in true community spirit.
- Paul Ndiege, brother to the late Tom Mboya, who guided us through the Tom Mboya Mausoleum, offering deep insights into Mboya's leadership legacy and inspiring dialogue on what true leadership means today.
- Nicholas, who led us through the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Mausoleum, unfolding the political journey of Jaramogi while helping fellows appreciate the culture and history of the Luo people.

Acknowledgements & Gratitude

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- Victor Ware at the Abasuba Peace Museum, who organized a traditional dance and facilitated learning sessions that deepened fellows' understanding of communities living on the margins in Kenya.

Together, we proved that living with difference is not abstract, it is lived, shared, and nurtured through community. For every contribution, big or small, we say Asanteni sana.

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