

Project profile

Working together for peaceful elections in Kenya 2017

Introduction

In May 2017, Saferworld launched a project to reduce the potential for violence around the August 2017 general elections in Kenya. The project is funded by the Embassy of Finland and covers Trans-Nzoia and Marsabit counties. It connects local, county and national groups working on the elections and sets up systems for identifying warning signs of violence and pursuing effective responses. State and non-state actors will work together to proactively address cases of violence and their causes. This project complements Saferworld's existing work on election violence in Kenya, which covers Isiolo, Migori and Uasin Gishu counties. The project also places emphasis on working with, and supporting the civil society network Uwiano Platform for Peace.

Background

Kenya has a history of fraught elections, worsened by ethnic tensions stoked by corruption and power struggles between rival politicians. More than 1,300 people died after violence erupted in 2007-8 following the victory of incumbent President Mwai Kibaki. A further 60,000 people were displaced.

By contrast, the 2013 elections were relatively peaceful due to the combined efforts of the government, civil society, religious organisations and the private sector. Devolution promised transformation of governance in Kenya, with power and resources shifting from the central government to the local level. However, continued patronage politics and persistent inefficiency have largely hampered progress. The dividing lines exposed during 2007 still linger as well, threatening to resurface if they are not addressed.

The next general election in August 2017 faces a new set of challenges. In addition to a constitution established in 2010, recent devolution means that Kenya's 47 counties now have more decision-making power. There is a risk that newly-elevated politicians may use their positions to appeal to ethnic discord in order to win votes. New county borders have also led to fiercer competition over resources, further exacerbating strains.

Despite tensions, there are mechanisms in place that can mitigate these drivers of conflict. It is through these mechanisms that this project will work to reduce the risk of violence. The project will focus on the importance of pre-empting where and when violence may occur through early warning and responding quickly to any potential outbreaks of conflict – an approach known as 'early warning and early response'.



Project

Promoting collective action to prevent and respond to election violence in Kenya

Partners

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) in Trans-Nzoia

Alliance for Communities in Hardship Areas (ALCHA) in Marsabit County

Project locations

Marsabit and Trans-Nzoia counties

Donor

Embassy of Finland in Kenya

Project duration

May 2017 – April 2018

Saferworld thematic area

Inclusive political processes

Project approach

With our two partners, Saferworld will:

- work with and facilitate collaboration between existing networks to create and promote an effective early warning and early response system to address election-related violence in Trans-Nzoia and Marsabit counties
- work with formal structures – such as county peace forums, county policing authorities and county government departments in charge of peace – as well as existing informal structures, such as councils of elders, inter-faith forums, women groups, youth bungenes (assemblies) and matatu (bus) and boda boda (motorcycle riders) associations
- contribute to the election response work led by the civil society network Uwiano Platform for Peace (Uwiano) at the county level. We do this by supporting Sub-County Peace Committees and civil society organisations affiliated with Uwiano. We will train them on election-related topics, including: gender integration into peacebuilding, early warning, early response, and monitoring and reporting
- strengthen existing informal community-based conflict prevention and resolution networks in Trans-Nzoia and Marsabit Counties. We will create communication channels between groups such as the sub-county peace committees, councils of elders, authorities and communities (with a particular focus on youth and women)
- establish partnerships with organisations and stakeholders that are already working on election violence in the areas where we work. We will bring them and the communities they work with into important conversations and trainings. We also work together to come up with plans for preventing election violence, ensuring coordination and coherence.

Throughout the project's lifespan, Saferworld will also monitor and evaluate results as well as periodically review progress.

When the project comes to a close, we will evaluate its success in reducing the risk of violent outbreaks before, during and after the election.

Local partners

Saferworld is implementing the project jointly with Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) in Trans-Nzoia and Alliance for Communities in Hardship Areas (ALCHA) in Marsabit County.

Anticipated outcomes

- Communities, including young people, women, officials, and current and aspiring politicians promote positive, non-violent engagement on the elections, crossing socio-political lines.
- Those who are part of Kenya's formal early warning early response system and informal peacebuilding structures communicate and coordinate their activities to achieve better results. Together, they work to prevent potential instigators of violence from taking part in the 2017 elections.

Key activities

- Raise awareness within communities in Trans-Nzoia and Marsabit counties on the electoral process, legislation and election timelines.
- Hold county-level dialogues in potential areas of violence in Trans-Nzoia and Marsabit counties. These will bring together different groups including various ethnic groups, youth, community elders, security teams and women leaders – giving them the opportunity to talk in a safe space.
- Support the Uwiano Platform to train and develop peace committees in project areas and improve the ability of civil society groups on early warning mechanisms.
- Train representatives to act as peace mediators, focusing on mediation skills, conflict and early warning and early response knowledge.
- Inform wider audiences on the outcomes of dialogues and meetings on electoral processes to ensure communities feel informed and the potential for rumours is reduced.
- Improve coordination and consultation around early warning, early response platforms in Trans-Nzoia and Uasin Gishu counties through forums.
- Provide communities with space for discussion on early warning early response platforms.
- Conduct roundtable meetings to reflect on experiences and lessons gained throughout the project.

Funded by



EMBASSY OF FINLAND
NAIROBI

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives.