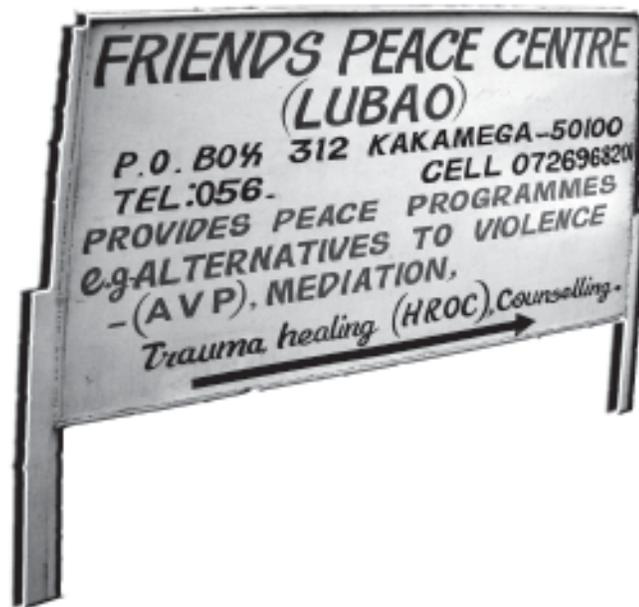


I Am the Change I Want to See in the World



Impact of and Vision for Alternatives to Violence Project Workshops in Western Kenya

June 2003 – September 2007

By *Getry Agizah* and *Aletia Dundas*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the many people who contributed to this evaluation. Firstly we thank the forty participants of this evaluation. They were truly willing to meet us and gave thoughtful and deep consideration to our questions. Some traveled considerable distances to meet with us. We also appreciate Bethany Mahler, who traveled all the way from Rwanda, bringing knowledge and experience from a similar study conducted in Rwanda. She stayed to guide us in the initial phase of this evaluation.

We thank Ben Richmond, the principal of Kaimosi Theological College, for the trust he showed to us and his willingness to give the team a chance to interview the

students. We also thank Sir Andrew O. Ojal, the Officer in Charge at the Government of Kenya's Eldoret Prison for allowing us to interview some of his staff and giving us a space to do so.

We also thank Getry Agizah who stays at the Friends Peace Centre—Lubao and who coordinated all the logistics for this project. She ensured that we were able to meet participants for the interviews, and organized accommodation and meals where necessary. We also thank the Friends for Peace and Community Development (FPCD) for letting us use the Friends Peace Centre in Lubao. It serves as the home of AVP and has also been the site where the team conducting

these reports was accommodated. We thank African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of Friends Peace Teams, and the Australia Yearly Meeting Peace and Social Justice Fund. Both these organizations provided the funding for this evaluation.

We would also like to acknowledge Malesi Kinaro, founder of FPCD for the blessing, trust and spiritual support she has given the team with her positive advice. She is a real mother to FPCD. So many thanks also go to the team of people who conducted the interviews. These are Getry Agiza, Caleb Amunga, Aletia Dundas, Eunice Okwemba, Bernard Onjala, and Peter Serete.



Getry Agizah, a member of Kakamega Yearly Meeting of Friends, is the founding coordinator of the Friends Peace Center in Lubao, Western Province, Kenya. She was one of the original participants in the 2003 initial trainings in Kenya. She has facilitated over seventy-five AVP workshops in Kenya. She has a three and a half year old daughter, Bennah.

Aletia Dundas is a Friend (Quaker) from Australia and has been involved with AVP in her home town of Sydney since 2002. Aletia completed her Masters Degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney in 2006, and most recently was working on the Peace and Disarmament Programme at the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva.

INTRODUCTION

Violence is the root cause of poverty. If AVP can bring peace, it can help people to help themselves and choose nonviolent ways of solving problems.

Martin Oloo, AVP participant

Martin is not the only one with high hopes for the spread of The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) as a peacebuilding tool in this country. AVP has been holding workshops in Kenya since 2003. Many participants have spoken glowingly about its impact in their personal lives and workplaces. The purpose of this evaluation is to find out if the project is achieving its goals, and how it might strengthen its impact throughout the country.

The methodology for this evaluation was to elicit personal testimonies to

discern the impact of AVP in Kenya. Some of our key questions focused on:

What has changed in the personal lives of those who attended workshops?

In what ways does AVP equip people to deal with violence and conflict in their workplaces? (in particular those working as pastors, prison officers and counselors)

In what ways does AVP suit Kenyan culture? In what ways does

it challenge cultural assumptions in a positive way? In what ways might it negatively effect Kenyan culture?

This report provides a background for AVP, its implementing organizations in Kenya and the specific context in Kenya's Western, Rift, and Nyanza Provinces. We outline the method used to gather information, highlight the findings, and make recommendations for AVP's future in Kenya.

HROC Workshop participants from Mt Elgon in front of the Peace Centre's mural



BACKGROUND

AVP is an experiential workshop process that encourages participants to resolve conflicts at the individual, family and community level. AVP began in 1975, when a group of inmates from the Greenhaven prison in New York City asked a local Friends' (Quaker) organization to provide them with nonviolence training. Out of this request was born the three day workshop which exists today. The process develops skills in

affirmation, communication, community-building, cooperation, trust and conflict resolution. AVP offers workshops in correctional institutes, schools and communities in more than 35 countries around the world. Since it is experiential and uses the insights of the participant's contributions, it has been well received in many cultural settings and among people of different ethnic, class, educational and social backgrounds. Though it was

founded by Friends, AVP philosophy states that it is a non denominational program which has welcomed people from different religions and which has been successful across a wide range of religious backgrounds.

There are three levels of AVP Training: Basic, Advanced and Training for Facilitators. Workshops at each of the three levels take three days and emphasize the building of community among

participants. In the Basic workshop the concepts outlined above are introduced. In the Advanced workshop participants choose the theme of focus that they want to explore more, e.g. fear, anger, forgiveness, stereotypes, communication or AIDS. In Training for Facilitators participants learn skills needed to lead workshops as part of a team of facilitators. The core of the philosophy is transforming power - the inner shining jewel in each individual that helps to transform negative thoughts of life to positive thoughts and to transform a conflict situation of violence to cooperation and understanding.

AVP reached Kenya in 2003, and took root in the western region. Since that time it has spread to people in Nyanza Province, Nairobi, the Coast and the Rift Valley. So far in Western Kenya, over 100 workshops have been held in schools, prisons and the community in Kitali, Kakamega, Lugari, Ndal, Webuye, Eldoret Prison, Shinyalu and Kaimosi Theological College. Over 2,000 people have benefited from this programme. The Alternatives to Violence Project-western Kenya was established as a partner project with Friends in Peace and Community Development (FPCD) and the

African Great Lakes Initiatives (AGLI). The program in Kenya is coordinated as two regions: Western Kenya and Nairobi/Mombasa. The western provinces are under FPCD and the Nairobi and Coast region is under Friends International Center, Ngong Road Friends Church.

FPCD has a committee that helps with organizing the AVP program. Mrs. Malesi Kinaro, Founder of FPCD, assists the organization with technical advice, ideas and organization of the workshops. Getry Agizah is the AVP coordinator and works together with other facilitators to help expand AVP in the Western region. FPCD was registered as a non governmental organization in 1995 with the first AVP training taking place in June 2003. FPCD has been able to facilitate the conducting of AVP, Mediation, and Healing and Rebuilding our Community (HROC) workshops and international work camps in Kenya. The peace center is the result of FPCD and AGLI efforts. The FPCD mission is to create a culture of peace and justice as well as to facilitate spiritual, mental and physical healing especially for vulnerable and traumatized groups and to encourage peaceful co-existence and wealth creation through economic empowerment projects.

They have branches in Kakamega, Eldoret, Lugari, Kitale, Kimilili and Malava. FPCD's vision is to see a peaceful Africa where sustainable development goes hand in hand with sustainable peace

The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) is a programme created by Friends Peace Teams (FPT). FPT is an organization consisting of sixteen Friends (Quaker) yearly meetings in the USA who have united to support the Friends tradition of promoting a more peaceful world. AGLI's mission is to strengthen, support and promote peace activities at the grass roots level in the Great Lakes region. AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, community trauma healing and reconciliation. Since its beginning in 1998, AGLI has worked with the people of the Great Lakes Region in Africa on a wide variety of projects ranging from international work camps to the creation of the AVP program in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, eastern Congo and Tanzania. They have also introduced community trauma healing workshops in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and now Kenya.



The Lubao Peace Centre



Participants begin each session with song and dance

METHODOLOGY

The sustaining force behind this evaluation was Getry Agizah and the Friends Peace Centre in Lubao. Initially, a team of six people from FPCD was established to conduct an evaluation of the AVP workshops with Kaimosi Theological students. This team included Bethany Mahler from Rwanda, who brought her expertise and experience of conducting a similar evaluation there. As a continuation of this evaluation, Getry then worked with Aletia Dundas, a volunteer from Australia, to adapt the interview questions to suit a wider group of participants and the two of them set out to interview AVP participants from around western Kenya including Kakamega, Kitale, Eldoret Prison, Shinyaloo, Lugari, Ndalui, and Webuye.

The first interview team developed the initial questions that would be asked of the Kaimosi Theological students. They employed a combination of two interviewers—one interviewed the participant as the other recorded the replies. The second phase involved a slightly more specific set of questions, also administered by two interviewers. Where possible, both interviewers recorded responses and compared information later on. See

Appendices on AGLI's website, www.aglionline.org, for details of the questions. We based our findings on individual interviews where respondents shared personal testimonies. All interviews were conducted in one language (English) but there was always a local interviewer available to translate if questions were not understood. Where possible, we interviewed relatives and/or neighbours of participants to test the reliability of personal testimonies.

One limitation of this self-report method is that it is difficult to prove whether people are answering truthfully and have a realistic awareness of their own behaviour. In order to confirm the reliability of responses we interviewed family members or neighbours to find out the impact of AVP on families and communities. While we felt that most respondents gave truthful answers to our questions, and offered valuable feedback in terms of areas for improvement, we noticed that there was an overall reluctance to discuss anything negative about the workshops. One explanation for this might be a cultural reluctance to offer criticism in general, but another might be the desire for funding. One woman

confessed later on that she had responded as she did (positively) in the hope of securing funding from the white interviewer. Following this development, we tried where possible to have the local interviewer asking the questions, and we stressed at the beginning the importance of constructive criticism for improving the process.

Another limitation was that the interviewing style was not consistent. The first group was asked slightly different questions than subsequent groups. Due to illness and other logistical circumstances, it was not always possible to have two interviewers present, which made it more difficult to compare responses and ensure validity of the results. However besides the limitations and challenges we faced, we are confident that the results of this evaluation are reliable and comprehensive. We were able to interview forty of the people who have attended workshops, across a spectrum of geographical, age, gender and occupational backgrounds. There were remarkable consistencies in the responses, indicating that some useful conclusions can be made about the impact of AVP in Kenya.

FINDINGS

We found that the responses revealed a set of themes: reactions to AVP, the reduction in interpersonal violence, the impact of AVP in the work environment, and cultural issues related to AVP in Kenya.

Reactions to AVP

Violence is the root cause of poverty. If AVP can bring peace, it can help people to help themselves and choose nonviolent ways of solving problems.

Martin Oloo, AVP participant

These sentiments reflect the expectation and hope of many people that AVP can offer real alternatives for cultures and communities engulfed in violence. This confirms that the work of FPCD in linking peace and development is responding to a great need.

In general, people liked the participatory style of the AVP workshops. Many commented positively about the notion of all being learners and teachers, particularly as a more formal classroom style is traditional here. The egalitarian nature of AVP came up time and again, and it was this lack of discrimination within the workshop that serves as such a powerful model for all sorts of communities to utilize. This will be explored more in the section on cultural issues.

The affirming philosophy of AVP has had a profound impact on many people.

It was interesting for me since it makes one to think positive about myself and good traits always. I have grown in the sense that when

I am called the adjective name all the negative thoughts stop and I thing in a respective way. For you as facilitators you might see these names as something small but it has the positive impact to me and my life.

Elphas Ganani Kitagwa,
AVP participant.

Very few people had anything negative to say about AVP. Commonly they said “there is nothing I would change about it” or “everything was great – everyone needs AVP”. But there was some constructive criticism, based mainly on logistics rather than the workshops themselves. Some said that the workshop of three days was too short. Others complained that logistics were sometimes lacking, with facilitators traveling long distances only to be met by a handful of participants, and no meals prepared. Bringing people together was difficult, and transport to and from workshops is always unreliable. People were crying out for more funding.

Some suggestions were that regional offices should be set up and workshops be held more locally in order to alleviate travel problems, and that each community find ways to sponsor their own workshops. In order to get more people involved, it was suggested that coordinators hold “AVP appetizer” sessions of just a few hours in churches and other communities to introduce people to the idea of AVP.

It was suggested that workshops be held for political leaders, in schools and in youth groups. People wanted more men to be trained, and suggested that workshops be held in rural areas where violence is entrenched. It was suggested that

activities be adapted to African settings, and that more follow-up activities be conducted with workshop alumni.

Reduction in Interpersonal Violence

I need to lead as a role model. If I go out to preach peace, am I personally peaceful? After I did the trainings, I knew I had a big task ahead of me to see peace prevail in this nation. I can only achieve that if I start with myself and those close to me.

Peter Serete, AVP facilitator

Many respondents shared Peter’s feelings that peace at the national level must begin at the individual, family and community level. Many people reported that they noticed a change in themselves after having attended the AVP workshop. Some seemed surprised, indicating that they came to the workshop to learn how to resolve the conflicts of others, and found that it had a huge impact on them, and their relationships with family members.

Before there had been conflicts in my family. But after the workshop I had to sit down with my family and talk to them and they knew I was a changed person. Now the relationships are much better.

Christopher Majani, AVP participant

Emotions are often not acknowledged, understood or spoken about in Kenya, so it was not surprising that many people spoke about the new ways that they were dealing with emotions, whether it was anger, sadness or frustration. “AVP has helped me to be transparent. In the past I could not share my feelings. I used to die with them by myself,” said



Two participants relax with a cup of tea during a workshop break

Eunice Okwemba. While it might not seem like a big change, for the people we spoke to, even recognizing and affirming an emotion was a big step.

I used to be angry and all I did was to look for the weakest vessel which was my younger sister whom I could beat badly. Before the AVP workshop my anger could not be relived without beating somebody but now I have developed a friendly heart.

Noel Wanyonyi,
a young lady participant

Many, like Noel, spoke honestly about recognition of their personal violence. Collins Indeche, a young man, said, “I didn’t know how to hold anger, only fighting back was the solution.” Now he congratulates AVP for having reached him at the right time.

Ben Mukwanja, the husband of a participant, was talking about Nandi hills clashes in 1992 when his family was at home and he was working far away from home. Houses were burnt and when he went to resettle his family, he was called back to work, threatened that he would lose his job if he did not report immediately. So he left his wife and children still displaced. This has affected his elder children; to date they don’t want to hear about going

to visit their ancestral land. “But since my wife did the AVP we are working on how to have open sharing with our children about their emotions.”

Many participants talked about the changes in their family relationships as a result of their involvement with AVP. These were powerful changes, and often challenged established gender roles as well as helping to resolve conflicts within the family. They mentioned the usefulness of “I” messages, of expressing their feelings and the importance of dialogue.

My husband comes in late and starts quarrelling. I used to quarrel too, but when I went quiet he also calmed down and kept quiet. I found if I am not talking and he’s not talking it will be alright.

Jacqueline Wanangwe,
AVP participant

AVP has helped me handle my children nonviolently. When I saw mistakes I jumped in with a lot of noise. Now I want to share it out, and I’m always ready to change when I’m wrong. Now I don’t shout as much, and when they are alone I hear my children say ‘these days mum doesn’t shout a lot.

Eunice Okwemba, AVP facilitator

A lot has been attained. In the house she has come down to even advise me not to react to my emotion, instead we talk. She has made me think the importance of giving her a chance in family matters.

Joseph Wanangwe,
husband of a participant

There is more friendship in the house. She felt sometimes I made decisions on my own, but it’s just because I didn’t understand. She was telling me that I was trying to buy a small vehicle on my own, but she had certain issues that we needed to discuss, to get the best benefit for the family. So then she changed my mind and we are now thinking together, we are looking for ads to acquire a bigger vehicle for business. She is talking in a manner to convince me of sharing issues in the family.

Alfred Muse,
husband of participant

Trust was another issue mentioned by participants when they spoke of AVP strengthening their relationships at home.

Before I did AVP, I used to walk with a key to the door of my food store everywhere I would go. And this led me family to be starving if I’m not around. Only then I realized that they had pricked a

hole in the granary and were stealing maize. But after doing AVP, and presenting my issue to the group discussion, I am not ashamed because I realized that it's important to trust your partner. So now I have started leaving the key at home. Joseph Webb Nabwela, AVP participant.

The Impact of AVP in the work environment

While conflict touches the lives of each one of us, some of the people we spoke with talked of how relevant AVP was in their vocation. *"I prefer reaching people than preaching at the pulpit,"* said Collins Indechi Shipimiro, a 25 year old theological student from Kaimosi. Certainly, the testimonies many people gave us indicated that so much of the work of a pastor in Kenya is pastoral. People are coming to their local pastors for advice on anything from personal dilemmas, to marital disputes and conflicts between neighbours. So, those training or working as pastors in churches found that a large part of their role is to counsel people about their interpersonal conflicts. Since Kenya's church leaders also act as community leaders, AVP training for church leaders was seen as vital to bringing peace to the community.

During the interviews with Kaimosi Friends Theological College students, we found that AVP has a major role to play in church activities. The students interviewed saw that many of the AVP lessons have taught church leaders to bring peace and change in their churches. It helps them to solve problems peacefully without looking down upon others.

As a pastor AVP has really helped me to reach so many people who are suffering from different kinds of conflicts and managed to help them overcome. AVP theological student participant.

It was found that AVP provided useful materials and tools for theologians in addition to the Bible, and that these tools have had a great impact on the community at large.

After the workshop my approach to the church members was so good that some members even come to me for counseling. It has also improve my relationship in my family. It is my plea that many pastors should be trained because they have a wider opportunity of meeting many people in their congregations and through preaching they can also spread the AVP. Pastor Kissinger Aluende, AVP participant.

Those working as prison officers in Eldoret Prison also found the lessons valuable in dealing with particularly violent behaviour. In particular, they noted the importance of providing positive role models for the inmates. They also talked about respecting the causes of violence and suggested a workshop involving both inmates and prison officers to show that we are all human beings.

I realized that it's not through violence that we can change prisoners. Arthur Agiza, prison officer.

AVP taught me how to handle violent inmates. For example, a prisoner who was arrested on a murder charge was being violent and demanding in the kitchen. All the other officers were looking at her as greedy, but since I had learnt to look for good in everyone I tried to understand her and realized that she was stressed and that was why she was demanding so much food. I now know how to cool down and help problem solve by rehabilitation. Caroline Chepkonga, prison officer.

People working in the broad area of social work also found AVP helpful. Those counseling victims of domestic violence gained further skills useful in their work.



Workshop facilitators lead the group in song and dance



Participants in the workshop

AVP has helped me in my work with survivors of domestic violence. I now understand about trauma and realize when my clients are traumatized. I am thinking of starting a support group for survivors of domestic violence. Martin Oloo, social worker.

Most of the people interviewed said that they developed an enhanced ability to resolve conflicts non-violently because of the AVP lessons. Lessons on the transforming power really encouraged most of them to go to and help others in the community. Many workshop participants who were not social workers by trade found that, as a result of the workshop, community members were coming to them for advice.

When I did my trainings, I didn't tell anyone, but now they feel I am the right person to seek advice from and come to me with problems. For example, if a child and mother have a disagreement, the child will come to me and we will go together to the mother to try and work it out. Peter Serete, community volunteer.

In the community where I'm from, I'm the only one who's done AVP. Many people come to me for counseling. I don't know how they knew, but they've benefited from what I got from the AVP workshop. Christopher Majani, security guard.

"I used the information I get from AVP to solve a problem between my neighbour and his son who was mischievous" said Collins Indechi who was very happy after learning that he can be listened to by his neighbors and also being accepted in the community and church to preach AVP to different community members.

Cultural Issues

There were a number of ways that people indicated that AVP culture is different from Kenyan (or African) culture. These differences seemed to relate to understandings of superiority and inferiority in relation to gender and age. Many of those interviewed talked about the superior role of men in society, and the difficulties that women face in having their point of view heard, and their position as victims of domestic violence. For the most part, AVP

was seen to be a positive influence, gently challenging violent power structures and encouraging empowerment for women in various ways.

Males have a superiority complex in Kenyan culture. For example, if you love your wife, you should beat her. This is one way that AVP differs. It takes time for men to understand that women are similar to them. Martin Oloo, AVP participant

In African culture, men are very difficult. They cannot apologize easily. This disadvantages women. Women have no permission to look into their husband's eyes and tell them what they think. That is a bad tradition. Peter Serete, AVP facilitator.

So how exactly does AVP challenge these violent traditions? *"AVP equalized everyone"* said Kim Gonzalez. *"Getting a 50 year old male church leader to play the part of a wife in the role play was good"*. The role plays in AVP are more than just a chance to have fun or practice conflict resolution skills. Participants are encouraged to play

a character different or opposite to themselves in order to empathize with others.

One participant commented on the role of men as leaders in the workshops.

All the facilitators were ladies. I thought, "Are men not involving themselves in peacebuilding?" I felt it wasn't good not to involve all people. Men prefer to go out and work, and AVP is voluntary. Men don't like being volunteers, sleeping in a classroom etc – it's a pride thing. It's high time men swallow their pride and try to change things. Then I realized that I am the change I want to see in the world, so I took responsibility, and took the three stages of training. Now I can challenge other men because now men are part of it". Peter Serete, AVP facilitator.

Age, as an area of discrimination, was also mentioned by many

respondents. A few people mentioned that young people are not free to share their ideas or offer advice to older people.

In Luhya culture a child should respect what the father has said. However much it will affect the child negatively or positively while in AVP a child is allowed to make a decision. Emily Mukwanja.

In Kenyan culture there is a class system whereby richer people don't help others and also don't share what they have. One person who was interviewed said he just wanted AVP to continue on and on because he was now living peacefully in the community. In applying the aspects of the old culture, participants commented that AVP also stood as an example for the future culture. Following on from the discussion of emotion, some people commented that openness was also an issue to be addressed. Participants said they initially didn't like being open, but in AVP people could say anything and

they have seen the results and now think its good to be open.

One cultural issue that some respondents mentioned was the non-religious aspect of the workshop. Given that 80% of Kenyans are Christian, and the other 20% are also strong in their faith, a process introduced as multi-faith, or "non-religious but spiritual" was viewed with some hesitation. "Spiritual" can be viewed as bad spirits, or witchcraft. In Kenya, prayers now take place at the commencement and ending of a workshop. When asked how facilitators might address this issue, Peter Serete suggested, "*Facilitators should highlight the need of all human beings for peace. It is not just for Quakers or Christians*".

RECOMMENDATIONS

"We are living in communities where we experience violence in our day to day life and we've fallen victims of circumstance," said Ida Nelson. "*We should have more AVP workshops because it's the only way we can reach more people,"* added Tabitha Saya from Kaimosi Friends Theological College. These students have articulated the great need for AVP.

The need and demand for AVP workshops was overwhelming and more participants were anxious to know the future plans of AVP. At end of three days of basic workshop, the participants praise the teachings. "*We need to finish all*

the stages, AVP is good, and it was brought at the right time to the right people," said Pastor Kissinger. "*I wish our local leaders, politicians and youth could undergo AVP training, because they are very violent, the teachings are so good and can empower them,"* said Tabitha Saya. It was also recommended that there is a need for numerous workshops. It was clear that additional support would be useful so that many participants to complete all three stages and become facilitators, which will enable the rapid spread of AVP. "*There is need of AVP to many parts of this region; I am the*

only one who is trained in my community and it's difficult to spread AVP alone," Tabitha Saya.

The suggestion that workshops be coordinated and sponsored locally will be passed on to the coordinators. This would alleviate some of the travel difficulties, and ensure that more people in each region are trained. The idea of offering "AVP appetizers" will help to spread the word about the process and its impact. There was also a suggestion to increase the length of AVP workshops.

CONCLUSION

There are so many examples of AVP's positive influence in the lives of Kenyan people. There is Evans whose elder brother had refused to stay at home due to conflicts with parents. After Evans attended the lessons of AVP he talked to his brother and now he is peacefully staying at home. There is thirty year old Kissinger Aluende who helped two brothers in his church who were fighting over land issues to resolve their issues and they now are staying together peacefully. Eunice finds herself to be a calmer parent, and Jacqueline has found a positive way to approach her husband's bursts of anger. Carolyn has begun to understand the causes of violent behaviour of some prison inmates. Martin has ideas about forming a support group for survivors of domestic violence. These are just a few of the remarkable people influenced by AVP since it began five years ago. They stand as proof that affirming yourself and caring for each other can take place and the principles of AVP play a big role here.

We found that the AVP process is useful for theological students,

prison officers, social workers and community members as it gives them tools for counseling members of their denominations, resolving community disputes and dealing with violence in their personal lives.

AVP has challenged some aspects of the Kenyan culture that are disempowering to women and young people. AVP models an egalitarian community structure and offers new ways of respecting and communicating with others. AVP also encourages openness that isn't always comfortable. Through this, people have been able to recognize, understand and talk about emotions that up until now were unspoken and unaddressed.

Many reported the impact of AVP in their personal lives, reinforcing AVP's goals of managing anger, affirming oneself and others, improving communication skills and the resolution of conflict. So many people talked about better relationships with children, parents, spouses and neighbours as a result of the AVP lessons.

After so many years of confusion and violence in our communities, and with politics leading to pain and fighting, we are working hard to reach as many affected people as possible. So many people spoke of AVP bringing peace to Kenya, and while this might seem like a far off dream at the moment, small ripples of hope and change are taking place. As we write this report, FPCD has organized peace-building workshops that bring together community leaders from Mt Elgon, a region ravaged by violent conflict in Kenya's west. Facilitators from Burundi and Rwanda, who adapted AVP workshops to the specific situation of communities affected by the trauma of war, were invited to facilitate these workshops. They call the process "Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities" (HROC). In addition to the training of mediators that is already coordinated by FPCD, HROC has been greatly valued. We hope that these initiatives will contribute to peace in Kenya. Our next evaluation will look at the impact of these initiatives designed specifically for peace-building initiatives.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AVP came at the right time. When I entered the workshop I thought the facilitators must know my situation. Then I heard so many people having the same experience as me and I was healed. Eunice Okwemba, AVP facilitator.

Eunice's experience is common to so many who have attended Alternatives to Violence (AVP) workshops in Kenya. Although the Programme was only introduced in 2003, already small AVP communities exist around the country, and they are crying out for more workshops, more facilitators and more funding. Not only are people more willing to understand and talk about emotions and trauma in their own lives, but many are using the lessons they learnt in AVP to counsel and care for others.

With funding from the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams and Australia Yearly Meeting's Peace and Social Justice Fund, and support from Friends Peace Centre-Lubao, a small team set out to evaluate the impact of and lessons learnt from five years of AVP workshops. They interviewed forty people who have participated in AVP workshops since its introduction in Kenya. The aim was to find out if and how this process has impacted people in their personal lives and in communities where they have a leadership role. Other aims were to find out whether the process has adequately adjusted to Kenyan culture, and if there are any changes that need to be made to make the process more effective.

The methodology for this process took place in two stages, and involved largely face-to-face

interviews. An initial group of interviewers visited Kaimosi Friends Theological College with specific questions about the impact of AVP on young church leaders. The second phase involved two interviewers visiting workshop participants from Kakamega, Kitale, Lugari, Ndal, Webuye, Eldoret Prison and Shinyalu who had participated in AVP workshops since 2003. This group was asked a slightly different set of questions. Where possible, we also interviewed family members or neighbours of participants to confirm behavioural changes.

Through the course of the interviews, we found that AVP is having an impact on both individuals and communities. Countless testimonies were given as to how lessons from AVP have been applied in the home. Those who deal with violence or conflict in their work, particularly pastors, prison officers and social workers, indicated that the principles of AVP had not only given them useful tools for approaching conflicts in these workplaces, but has also led to suggestions and initiatives that will foster dialogue and support in the future. People also made suggestions about ways to improve the workshops, and the organization in general. These tended to be things like "make the workshop longer", "get more funding so we can hold them more regularly" and "focus on areas where violence is entrenched".

When discussing the "cultural" impact of AVP, issues of gender and age were at the forefront. In Kenyan culture women are denied a chance to talk before men and indeed men feel superior to women. Young people are also not encouraged to

offer advice to older people. On the other hand, as one participant said, AVP equalizes people. There is need of awareness and education to enlighten people about the different consequences of violent traditions and empowering traditions, calling to mind that there is good in everyone. It was also suggested that more men should join the facilitation teams, thereby providing positive role models for other males.

Religion is a big part of Kenyan culture, and the majority of AVP participants are Christian. AVP was originally promoted as "spiritual, not religious", and this description caused discomfort for many Kenyans, as spiritual can often mean witchcraft. It was suggested that facilitators focus on the need for peace in all communities, regardless of faith, rather than talking about spirituality.

While this study only provides a snapshot of the impact of AVP, yet so many testimonies supported one another. Therefore we feel that it reflects the general impressions and role of AVP in Kenya today. We have been given a stronger mandate: to strengthen the programme, to train more facilitators, to reach the areas where violence is most entrenched and to empower local groups to operate more independently.