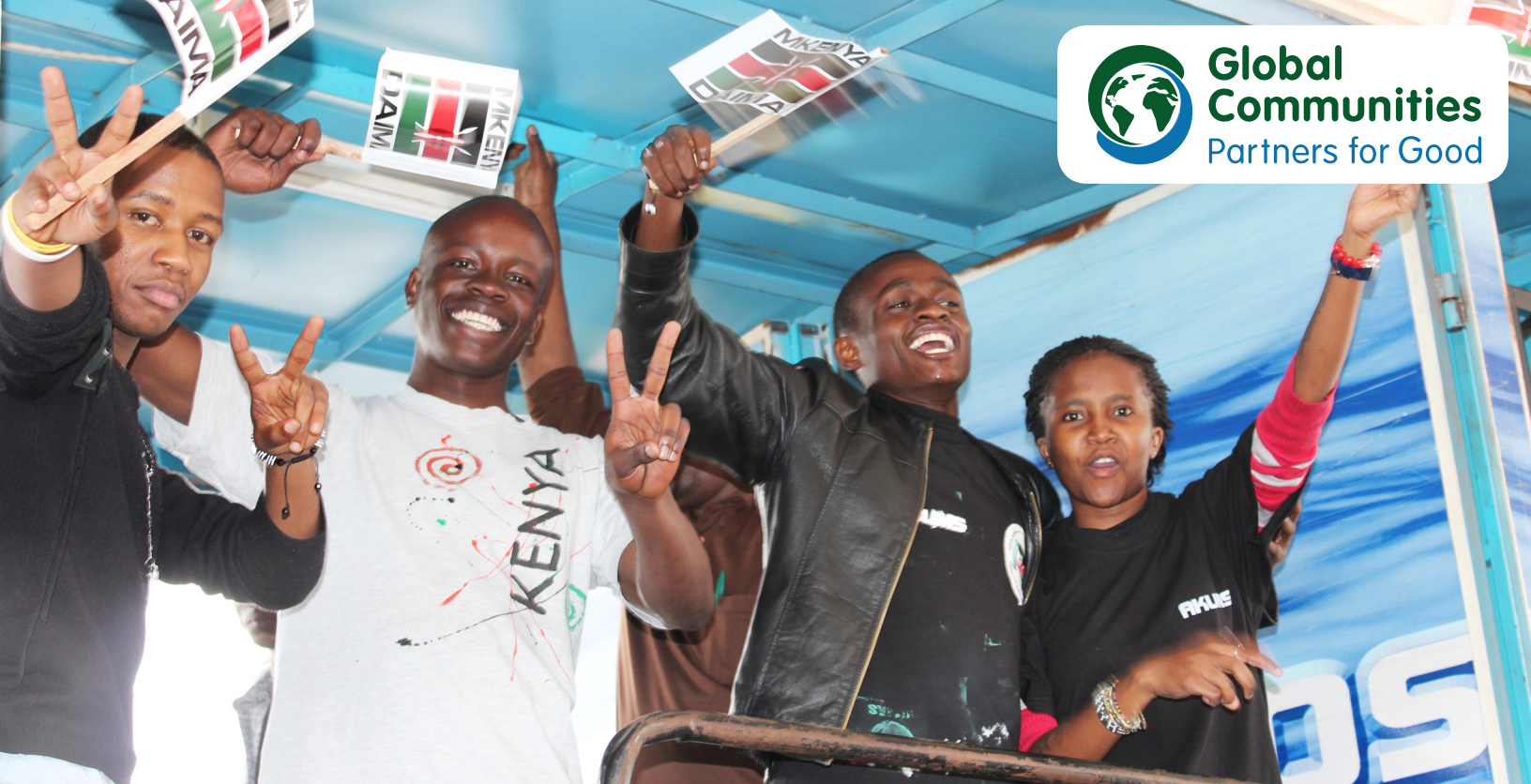




**Global  
Communities**  
Partners for Good



## Partners for Peace: Community and Conflict Resolution

*“We are the people, we are the problem, we are the solution.”*

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### Background

It has been estimated that sectarian, political and ethnic conflicts lead directly to more than 55,000 deaths per year.<sup>1</sup> Beyond this immediate effect, the psychosocial, developmental and economic effects of these conflicts have a huge international impact, as instability in one area spills into another, most recently witnessed on a cross-regional scale in Mali.

While conflict is often incited by outsiders or more powerful individuals or groups, it is the communities that suffer most. Sustainable conflict resolution requires complementary efforts such as government-led initiatives, strengthened security, economic development and much more. The focus of this paper is specifically the role of communities in conflict resolution – working at the grassroots level to bring communities together to resolve the sources of conflict and develop cooperation that leads to peace and stability.

This paper presents tangible lessons that can be applied to future conflict situations by organizations engaged in community-based conflict resolution. The key steps and activities outlined below have been developed by Global Communities (formerly CHF International) since our first community-based conflict resolution program in Guatemala in 1996 through to our present day efforts. We have chosen to present case studies of Global Communities' current USAID-funded work in Kenya – where national elections have the potential to incite large scale conflict – and nine years of the USAID-funded Community Action Program in Iraq (2003-2012).

<sup>1</sup> Geneva Declaration, Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011: <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/measurability/global-burden-of-armed-violence/global-burden-of-armed-violence-2011.html>





## Why Work at the Community Level?

Community-driven conflict resolution has tremendous potential for sustainable change. Communities have local knowledge – they know better than anyone the specific needs, sensitivities, assets and limitations of a particular area, as well as the sources of strife. The role of the outside agent is to facilitate their interactions and build their capacity to solve their own problems. Communities must “own” the process of their reconciliation for it to be sustainable in the long term. When local actors resolve differences at the community level, they share both a sense of ownership and accountability, which makes their collective work toward a common goal more fruitful and successful.

The role of the outside facilitators is to break down barriers between conflicting groups, and to support collaboration among the groups to help them peacefully resolve their differences and embark on activities that benefit both sides. These shared activities can be the most effective way to resolve a community need and to demonstrate the benefits of cooperation. In such cases the facilitators can contribute seed funding to this process along with technical advice on how to accomplish the task and work with external contractors and local government. But it is up to the community to put in resources – whether financial, labor, land or simply time – and to manage the process. This builds their capacity for future cooperation to meet joint needs, provides demonstrable evidence of the benefits of working together and provides important skills training.

## Key Steps to Achieving Peaceful Resolution

Facilitating successful community conflict resolution requires specific approaches to ensure that all voices are heard, transparency is ensured, and that the right incentives are created for working together. Global Communities has, in the preceding 18 years, developed approaches that can be adapted to different environments and situations. This approach is adaptable, but usually community conflict resolution will include most of the following:

- **Make initial contact with community members**

Explain how their expertise is one of the most valuable commodities at their disposal, and how the objective is to help them use it to achieve their goals to resolve conflict in their region. Listen to them – in their own territory – to learn their immediate and long-term needs, convey understanding of their situation and how, working together, the situation can be improved.

- **Hold community-wide meetings**

Meet with individuals and community leaders, first with single-identity groups and secondly with cross-identity groups, to define the problem and how it can be overcome. Encourage people to leave any embittered attitudes in the past and instead, focus on moving forward peacefully. Facilitate discussions that are sensitive to the desires of both sides and that lay the foundation for effective resolution, not a rehashing of previous battles.





- **Participation**

The participation of all voices is important. Every religious and ethnic group should be involved, as well as segments of society commonly overlooked such as women, youth, the elderly and disabled. Youth are especially important as they are often used as perpetrators of violence. The integrity of any program relies on voices from different groups being heard throughout the decision-making process.

- **Representative groups**

During the process, the community should elect or appoint members to a committee that represents the different groups involved in the process. Any projects undertaken are managed by this committee, and the committee is answerable to the community. It is the role of the committee to identify and select activities, to mobilize local resources to complete them, and to build partnerships. They are also the liaisons with local government.

- **Identify high-impact activities of shared interest**

As part of the process, it is important to identify issues that are the source of conflict. This can be as simple as competition for use of water or as complex as ethnic discrimination in government employment projects. Select an activity that is necessary, achievable and that will help opposing groups work together toward a better resolution of their problem. Initially, it is often most effective to select an activity that can be completed relatively quickly, since delayed progress often diminishes community involvement and resolve.

- **Implement the activity with community contribution**

Whether contributions of labor, cash, materials or expertise, work with communities to help them pool their collective resources. Community involvement is essential to ensuring the sustainability of projects and solutions.

- **Training**

Communities involved in conflict resolution are learning a replicable process. To that end, they require skills and tools to enable them to succeed in various situations. If a project is involved, train them in fair bidding, analysis of bids and awarding of contracts. Train them in how to approach local government, and bear in mind that reciprocal training is often needed.

- **Transparency**

Conflict situations involve broken trust. It is paramount that all aspects of the process of conflict resolution are open, public and accountable.

- **Monitor and evaluate project activities from start to finish**

Closely track activities to help prevent problems before they exist, and identify and address others before they escalate. Make sure that communities feel a strong sense of ownership but do not feel abandoned if something goes wrong or something unexpected occurs.



# KENYA



## Case Study – Electoral Violence

### Introduction

In 2007-08 Kenya experienced a crisis of post-electoral violence that led to estimates of up to 1,500<sup>2</sup> deaths and as many as 600,000 people displaced.<sup>3</sup> Much of the violence ignited by allegations of electoral rigging, followed ethnic lines and threatened to destabilize the country. Its enduring legacy has been one of displacement, grievances and a resurgence of inter-ethnic hatred resulting in a volatile environment that can be easily incited by those who believe such violence is in their political interests.

Since 2012 Global Communities and local partners PeaceNet and Kituo Cha Sheria have worked on Kenya Tuna Uwezo (KTU – “We have the power” in Swahili), a \$1.2 million, two-year USAID-funded program to reduce violent conflict in the informal settlements of Kiambiu, Korogocho, Kibera and Mathare in Nairobi. The program aims to ensure sustainability through building the capacity of community leaders and groups to work effectively and peaceably with one another across ethnic lines.

The informal settlements are a hotspot for conflict; they are often impoverished, have very dense populations, limited access to information, and reflect the ethnic makeup of the country. They are also frequently used by Kenyan politicians to manipulate their constituencies.

Kenya’s new constitution – promulgated in 2010 – provides an opportunity to reduce conflict. KTU is using the new constitution to help depoliticize issues and provide a viable platform for understanding and managing conflict. KTU is also working to ensure that members of the community understand the constitution and how to act on its provisions, instead of relying on others to interpret it for them. And by building peaceful, issue-based interactions prior to the 2013 elections, the program has prioritized reducing vulnerability incitement and the potential for election-related violence.

2 “Deal to end Kenyan crisis agreed”. BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7344816.stm>

3 “U.N.: 600,000 Displaced In Kenya Unrest”. CBS News: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/02/11/world/main3815702.shtml>







## Developing Community Dialogue in Kenya

The following outlines how the KTU team have engaged communities and fostered constructive dialogue for solving community conflict.

### *Understanding Power Dynamics*

Upon engaging a community in any conflict situation, the external facilitator is immediately faced with a power structure within the community that must be understood quickly. The community's perceptions of the conflict may also be different from the outsider viewpoint.

### *Building Trust*

It is essential for external facilitators to gain the community's confidence since, when first entering a community, they are often considered a threat. The first questions asked are often "Who are you? Who sent you? Who are you allied with?" In the slum communities of Nairobi, Global Communities' experience was that there had been many visitors before and many consultations, but little had been achieved; therefore the initial approach was met with a lack of trust and people were difficult to engage. So it has been critical to enter the community honestly and openly, ready to answer these questions.

### *Identifying Leaders*

In the initial consultative meetings, conducted with the separate communities, the facilitator acknowledges that they are external and explain their goals. When members of the community stand up to tell their story, the facilitators take note of the influential members – who previously may have perpetrated violence – to whom the community will listen. Through these initial meetings they are able to identify the personalities who will be critical to their efforts at conflict resolution.

### *Individual Meetings*

After identifying these crucial community leaders, the team approaches them individually. They meet with them discreetly, often away from the community, to explain their role and ask questions about the issues affecting the communities. This gradually builds trust. At the same time, the team compares the stories they are hearing from each individual and builds a bigger picture of the sources of conflict, both perceived and real. Through these influential persons, the team reaches out to the broader community. They ask who else they should engage, and act on the recommendations of the individuals.





“Even though some of them have slaughtered members of my tribe, they are still my brother or sister. I cannot fight again. It is good to live together and share the resources that we have.”

—Judith Okango (pictured above center),  
Community Leader in Kiambu

### **Small Group, Single-Identity Meetings**

These individuals and leaders are brought together into small groups for premediation, often away from the home of the community to help reduce territorial tensions. The team checks the information it has been receiving, compares stories and has them confirmed or refined until they have a clear vision of the situation facing each group. They gather the intelligence necessary to understand the dynamics of each community and its conflict. These are “single identity” meetings, meaning of one group only.

### **Premediation of Leaders of Both Groups**

The team then brings together the leadership of the two sides of each conflict for premediation. The leaders are presented with the causes of the conflict as they have been described and asked for their agreement on these issues. The goal is to get the two sides to agree to solve problems and move toward reconciliation. When the situation becomes too heated, the team takes a step back and returns to single-identity meetings to deal with the problem. After it is dealt with, they re-engage both sides. Once the leaders agree on the conflict and the need to deal with it, the team moves on to the first big group assembly.

### **Large-Scale, Single-Identity Meeting**

With usually 35-40 people, but occasionally accommodating up to 75, the team meets with a large group of one side. Together, they examine the causes of the conflict and analyze them. The team asks, “How do you see the problems?” and then asks the large group to justify each grievance in turn. With each grievance, they identify which problems are based on perception and which are based on real, solvable issues, thus separating the “feel” from the “real.” The assembled are asked in each case who are the stakeholders in the real problems – local government, other communities, civil society groups – and the KTU team begins to help them to design ways to address the real issues. Finally, the groups are asked how they want to deal with the problems. At the end of the assembly the group has to agree to meet the people with whom they are in conflict.

### **Cross-Identity Dialogue**

After all the premediation, meetings with leaders and single identity group premediations, in each case a group is convened with representatives of both sides in the conflict. The group leaders already know the purpose of the meeting, and the team uses them as moderators in the discussion, training and coaching them in advance of the meeting. During the group meetings, the KTU team takes a back seat, and lets the communities discuss their own problems with their own leaders. The real sources of grievances, identified in the previous meetings, are brought up and the larger group confirms these. Then the moderators ask the larger groups how they can solve the problem and solicit ideas from the group on solutions.

At the large group meetings, they strategize together on methods for solving the most urgent issues, prioritizing them as a group. Once both sides agree on the top issues causing the conflict, they look to find the most important issue that can be addressed as quickly as possible. They then identify the first three or four most important steps and assign roles in the group to perform them. Global Communities takes on the roles that connect with the largest or most likely to be challenging partners, such as government or other big partner organizations. The community members are assigned roles relating to community work and local relationships. Each shares responsibilities according to their complementary strengths.

### **Implementing the Solution**

The implementing groups meet to report back on successes or challenges relating to their tasks in regularly reconvened groups, although frequent communication between partners – Global Communities and all sides of the conflict – is continued throughout the process. The issues are addressed differently, depending on the nature of the problem, but according to the principles addressed in *Key Steps to Achieving Peaceful Resolution*.

### **Applying Community-Based Conflict Resolution in Kiambu**

Within the informal settlements of Nairobi, limited access to resources often causes violent conflict. In the slum of Kiambu, this issue has divided the community along ethnic lines, with two of the largest ethnic tribes of Kenya, the Kikuyu and the Luo, on either side. After the violence in 2007 and 2008, many people were displaced from their original homes through violent eviction and lost family members in this violence.

“These youths have never come face to face since 2001; this is the greatest achievement for peace in Kiambu.”

—Mr. Muiruri, Provincial Officer, Kiambu District

Historically, the different ethnic groups living in Kiambu lived peacefully alongside each other. However, tensions flared in the 1990s due to political conflict surrounding national elections. With each election cycle, divisions between the groups became more pronounced, and violence along these fault lines became common. In 2001, leading up to the election of 2002, the Kikuyu and the Luo no longer felt safe living as one community. Villages began to form along ethnic lines causing people to be uprooted and displaced.

In the following years, tension, violence, and division increased within Kiambu. By the time the post-election violence erupted in 2007 and 2008, the boundary lines between the divided ethnicities were set in stone. It was no longer safe for either group to cross into the other's territory. Violent, deadly gangs formed along ethnic lines and they functioned as the leaders and controllers of the divided territories.

When the program was launched in Kiambu, the KTU team met with members of the community, following the approach outlined above. When the conflicting groups were brought together for a face to face meeting, it was the first time in more than a decade that these factions had sat in the same room peacefully. Through the dialogue that took place, both sides agreed to pursue peace. The groups agreed that their biggest problem was youth hostility, taking the forms of gang violence, and that for sustainable peace to come the people who were forcefully evicted from their homes needed to have their houses back.

In the weeks and months that followed, trust was built, dialogue was deepened, and grievances were addressed and forgiven. In looking toward the future, the membership of the groups agreed that to solidify their new bond, it needed to be formalized. On October 15, 2012, gang members of the Kikuyu tribe of Sagana and Luo tribes of Kosovo, an area of Kiambu from which the Kikuyu had been forcefully evicted, established the Kiambu Youth for Peace and Development.

Today, the group is addressing the issue of housing disputes. During the peace-building process they had just undertaken, the group leadership acknowledged that there could not be lasting peace without returning the houses to their original tenants. After much thought and discussion, the families that are currently living in these houses have agreed to vacate and let the rightful tenants move back in for the sake of lasting peace in their community.

While many challenges lie ahead, the cycle of violence has been stopped, and working together through dialogue has been established as the way forward. Choosing to tackle the biggest and most difficult problem in their community first, the group is ensuring peace will come from within the community itself and that ownership of the process will remain in their hands. They are working closely with the local authorities and program staff to make sure no one will go without housing once families begin moving out, ensuring that the cycle of being uprooted and displaced finally ends.



# IRAQ



## Case Study – Intractable Conflict

While Kenya provides a case study of ongoing conflict resolution based on inter-ethnic violence with the precipitating factor of elections, Global Communities' work in Iraq provides nearly 10 years of intractable, post-regime change violence and conflict resolution programming.

Global Communities began working in Iraq in June 2003 through the USAID-funded Community Action Program (CAP), which concluded in September 2012. Global Communities was one of several organizations that implemented the CAP program, directly overseeing implementation in the governorates of Babil, Karbala and Najaf and later expanding to cover Qadissiya, Wassit and Anbar. The program, which was delivered in three phases, evolved over time from a predominantly fast response community stabilization infrastructure-focused program to a holistic effort that builds a foundation for democracy and grassroots advocacy mechanisms. CAP I and II (2003-2008) focused primarily on building the capacity of community action groups to fill the gap of local government and exercise grassroots democracy by implementing projects on their own where necessary, and in partnership with local government where possible, to meet community needs. CAP III (2008-2012) focused on furthering the evolution of community-centered development by building the capacity of local government to take on its proper governance role as the locus of community needs assessment, prioritization, project design, funding and implementation.

CAP has been highlighted by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction as an example of effective and efficient use of resources in achieving US development and reconstruction aims in Iraq: "Unlike other USAID funded activities in Iraq, the CAP required local groups to contribute to projects. Implementation depended upon local facilitators and contractors, and "community action groups" composed of Iraqis elected by their neighbors...A USAID Inspector General audit found that CAP generally achieved its intended goals, including citizen participation, local government cooperation, and local employment generation."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience: [http://www.sigir.mil/files/HardLessons/Hard\\_Lessons\\_Report.pdf#view=fit](http://www.sigir.mil/files/HardLessons/Hard_Lessons_Report.pdf#view=fit), See pages 117-118





## Developing Stability through Community Dialogue & Cohesion in Iraq

At the commencement of CAP, communities throughout the country were severely affected by the aftermath of the Saddam Hussein regime collapse and a wave of rising sectarian violence that threatened to push the country into civil war. The CAP program pulled communities together around tangible projects through processes that were transparent, democratic and inclusive. They united citizens, traditional leaders and newly established municipal governments around issues of common importance that served the greater communities' needs. Uniting citizens with local leadership structures and giving them a voice was at the core of the project. Through this process, the fabric that knits communities together – thereby mitigating the chances of conflict – was rebuilt. This was the central

The minimum match requirement was 25% of the cost of the project, but by CAP III, 67% of project costs were met by communities and local government input.

focus of the CAP's approach: the projects served as a vehicle for mitigating conflict while meeting real needs.

CAP continued to register success even during the worst years of post-Saddam sectarian violence and in spite of a highly restrictive operating environment. When movements for expatriate staff became too dangerous, CAP took on an increasingly Iraqi face and continued on the principle of Iraqis helping Iraqis to better their country. The beneficiary communities moved the program forward by embracing it enthusiastically and doing their part to better the situation. Similarly, municipal governments became actively involved and contributed cost-share to projects that far exceeded established requirements.

The CAP process followed clear steps:

- Iraqi CAP staff make contact with a new community and explain the role of the program.
- A community-wide meeting is held, where the program is explained to the broader community. At this meeting, 8-12 persons are elected to serve on the "community action group" (CAG).
- The CAG meets to identify possible projects and to prioritize them. The top priority project is chosen.
- Community representatives meet with project engineers and local officials to plan and begin implementing the project.
- The CAG, with assistance from CAP staff and seed funding from CAP, oversees the contractors, inspects and signs off on work.
- Once the project is complete, it becomes the responsibility of the community and local government to maintain. This requires training for the CAGs in advocacy with local government, and training for local government in how to respond appropriately to community approaches and requests. This became the central focus in CAP III.
- Once the initial project is complete, the CAG is encouraged to develop other projects to meet their needs, and to seek funding from local government and other bodies to achieve this. They may also form "cluster committees" with nearby communities to consider larger projects that impact multiple communities.
- CAP communities are required to invest in the project usually through materials, labor, land or whatever appropriate means, in order to ensure that they have a stake in the project, and thus to increase the likelihood of sustainability.



Throughout the process, CAP employees worked with CAGs to build their members' skills and help them better serve the needs of local residents. All the CAGs received initial training in such topics as community mobilization, democratic meeting methods, and project identification. As the CAGs advanced, they received training on assessing community needs and resources, project design, leadership, communication, and advocacy, problem analysis, conflict mitigation, economic development, and the organization and management of nongovernmental organizations.

Over nine years, CAP introduced democratic, structured methods of peacefully resolving community needs in a conflict-racked country to communities with a population of more than 24 million people, approximately 75 percent of the population, and involved more than 1,800 community action groups to help local officials and communities learn and apply community conflict resolution methods. In a country with no grassroots democratic history, CAP was able to demonstrate on a community scale across all 18 governorates in the country the ability to solve community challenges peacefully and democratically, and was able to mobilize resources to great effect, creating a sustainable process for conflict avoidance and resolution at the community and local government level. At the beginning of CAP, communities gave on average 25 percent of the cost of each project in time, labor, materials or funding; by the final phase, the communities and local government with which Global Communities worked gave on average 67 percent of the costs of each project.



No Global Communities' CAP projects were targeted for vandalism or destruction – a serious measure of community commitment in a conflict-zone.

Importantly, a measure of the success of the program was that, throughout the life of the project, no Global Communities' CAP projects were targeted for vandalism or destruction – a serious measure of community commitment in a conflict zone.

### Competition for Resources in Wassit

The Keesh area of Wassit is composed of a number of impoverished villages that have long suffered from lack of access to drinking water. People in these villages have depended on contaminated water from old wells for drinking and washing for many years, causing water-related diseases – such as cholera and yellow fever – to spread easily.

Global Communities first met with this group of communities in early 2009. After meeting with local leaders and holding a community-wide meeting, the community elected a group of representatives to serve on the CAG. The CAG was then given training on how best to identify the needs of the community. For Keesh residents, the decision was easy. Competition for scarce clean water resources had led to strained relations between two villages in the area, one Sunni and one Shia. The top priority was to find a way to provide fresh drinking water, both for reasons of health and to reduce the potential for conflict.

With the cooperation of the local government and with regular input from CAG members, Global Communities provided 15 water tanks that gave access to fresh, potable water to poor families in the area. In addition, due to the participatory method that brought together members of the different communities to solve their problems, the project was able to improve the relationship between the two sparring villages, easing the sectarian tensions and giving them cause to celebrate. Elders from the two villages even came together during the holy month of Ramadan to break their fast in an Iftar banquet celebrating the completion of the project.





Due to the participatory method that brought together members of the different communities to solve their problems, the project was able to improve the relationship between the two sparring villages, easing the sectarian tensions and giving them cause to celebrate.

## Conclusion

The work of Global Communities in Kenya and Iraq demonstrates the importance of community-based approaches to conflict resolution as an effective model for instilling peace and reducing strife around the world. Community-level interventions effectively complement other approaches to conflict mitigation, from early warning systems to working with governments to develop appropriate legal and security systems.

The process varies depending upon the environment, but there are key similarities in every environment: by approaching the community in a context-appropriate way and identifying leaders; working with the community to find the underlying, often resource-based, issues of conflict; and building their capacity to resolve those issues themselves, we can reduce grassroots incentives to violence, ameliorating existing conflicts and those resulting from outside manipulation of existing tensions. These lessons can be learned and applied to future situations, where organizations seek to mitigate conflict at the community level.



Founded in 1952, Global Communities (formerly CHF International) currently operates in over 20 countries and territories. Our mission is to be a catalyst for long-lasting positive change in low- and moderate-income communities around the world, helping them improve their social, economic and environmental conditions. Our reputation is built on the strong relationships we have with the communities we serve—engaging and involving them throughout the development process to keep control and ownership in their hands.

For more information, please visit our website at: [www.globalcommunities.org](http://www.globalcommunities.org)