



**ACTION ON POVERTY**

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**Addressing Community Conflict in Recent Projects**



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# Addressing Community Conflict in Recent Projects

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APT Action on Poverty is a UK based charity working to reduce the poverty of the most poor and vulnerable people in Africa and Asia by helping them get skills and knowledge to have a sustainable livelihood. We aim to provide opportunities for vulnerable people to improve their quality of life and address the root causes of their poverty.

Our target groups include people living with HIV/AIDS, disabled people and vulnerable women and youths, as well as people facing harsh environmental conditions, or rebuilding their lives following conflict or natural disasters.

This is a report of the findings of a small piece of research conducted in August 2013 which looked at how conflict, conflict awareness and conflict mitigation were being addressed within our projects with the intention of informing the delivery and development of future projects.

***We would like to give special thanks to volunteers Christopher Capper, for developing the questionnaire/collating the results and Jamie Stone for producing a draft report. We would also like to thank APT's partners who participated in the survey.***

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# Addressing Community Conflict in Recent Projects

## 1. Introduction

APT Action on Poverty has been working on a number of project interventions in Uganda, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Sri Lanka with partner organisations aimed at reducing poverty and improving livelihoods, particularly in marginalised groups. These interventions have the potential to impact on conflict in the communities where these projects are being delivered. Thus within the context of this report, conflict is not only defined as war or armed struggle (even though some of our projects operate in post armed conflict contexts) but also mainly it is defined as:

***A serious disagreement and argument (in a family, group, community, region, nation).***

***If two people or groups are in conflict, they have had a serious disagreement and have not yet reached agreement.***

In August 2013, through a questionnaire survey, we asked our project partner organisations to tell us how/if conflict awareness had been included in the design of our projects, what influence the project had on community conflict and how this would influence future project design. Potential benefits to be gained included documenting existing good practice and a deeper sensitivity to community conflict which could be applied to future projects. This is significant because not only can interventions avoid aggravating existing community tensions, but also be better placed to address them.

## 2. Methodology

Basic questionnaires were designed and sent to partner organisations involved in APT's current projects (at August 2013). Questionnaires (see Annexe A) consisting of four sections covering: any community conflict before the project and how the project altered community conflict, if at all; how vulnerable people in target areas were included and finally a reflection section. Responses were received from 7 partners for 8 projects as shown in Table 1 below.

| <b>Table 1: Projects and partners</b>                                    |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <b>P169</b> Women fight inequality and destitution                       | KWIECO, Tanzania                   |
| <b>P170</b> Family health and sustainable livelihoods                    | Business Creations, Sri Lanka      |
| <b>P171</b> Vocational skills training for enterprise capacity           | SITE, Kenya                        |
| <b>P172</b> Promoting rights and livelihoods of soapstone sector workers | SITE, Kenya                        |
| <b>P174</b> Livelihoods for young people                                 | VEDCO/Heifer, Uganda               |
| <b>P175</b> Livelihoods for young people                                 | MAPCO, Sierra Leone                |
| <b>P179</b> Rights and livelihoods for domestic workers                  | Platform for Labour Action, Uganda |
| <b>P181</b> Reaching disabled people                                     | CBTD, Sri Lanka                    |

### **3. Questionnaire Results**

#### **3.1 Causes of community conflict prior to projects**

The most commonly identified causes of conflict prior to the start of projects were:

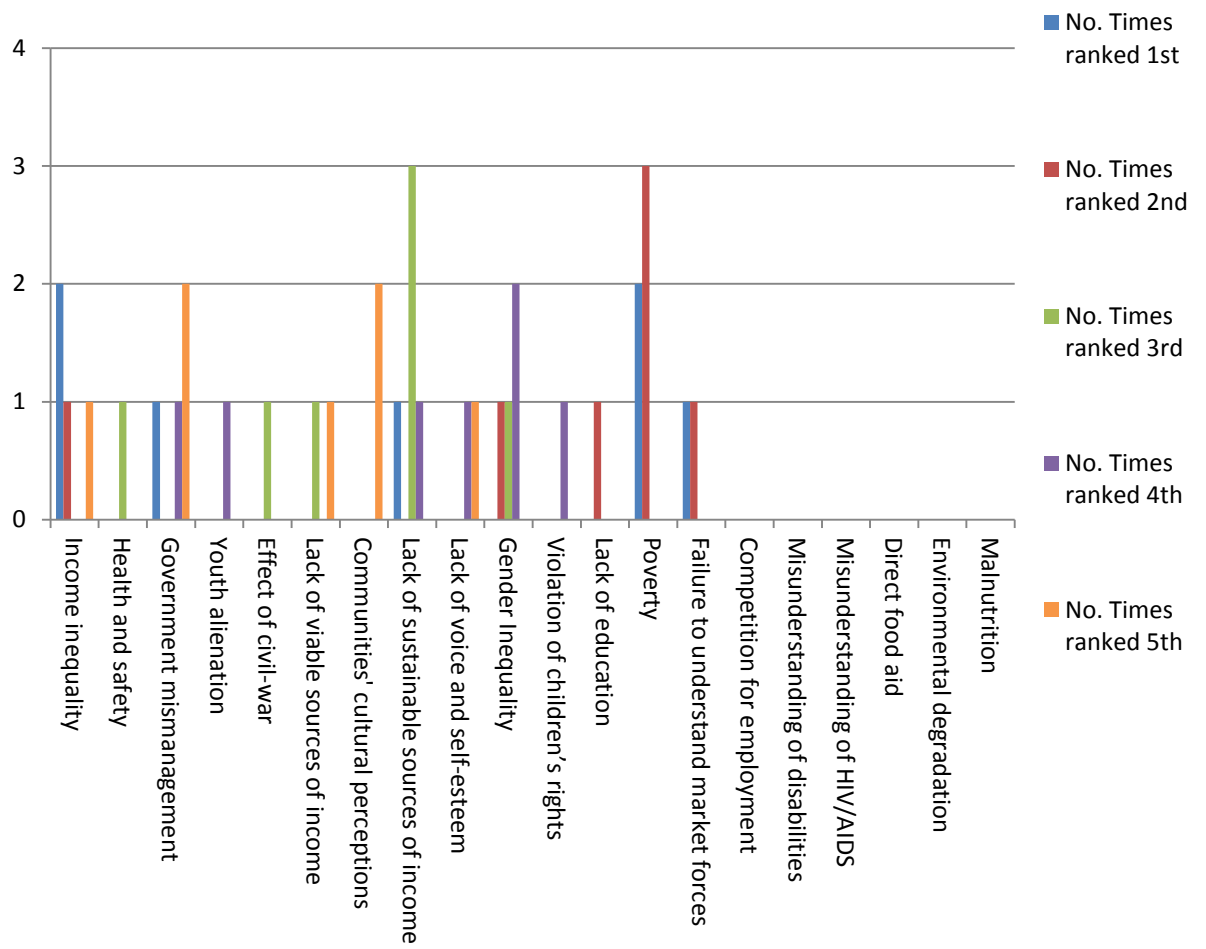
- income inequality
- poverty
- a lack of sustainable income
- gender inequality

These causes were often linked to, or occurred alongside unequal distribution of community resources in one form or another. Civil conflict was also a major issue in some projects as outlined below.

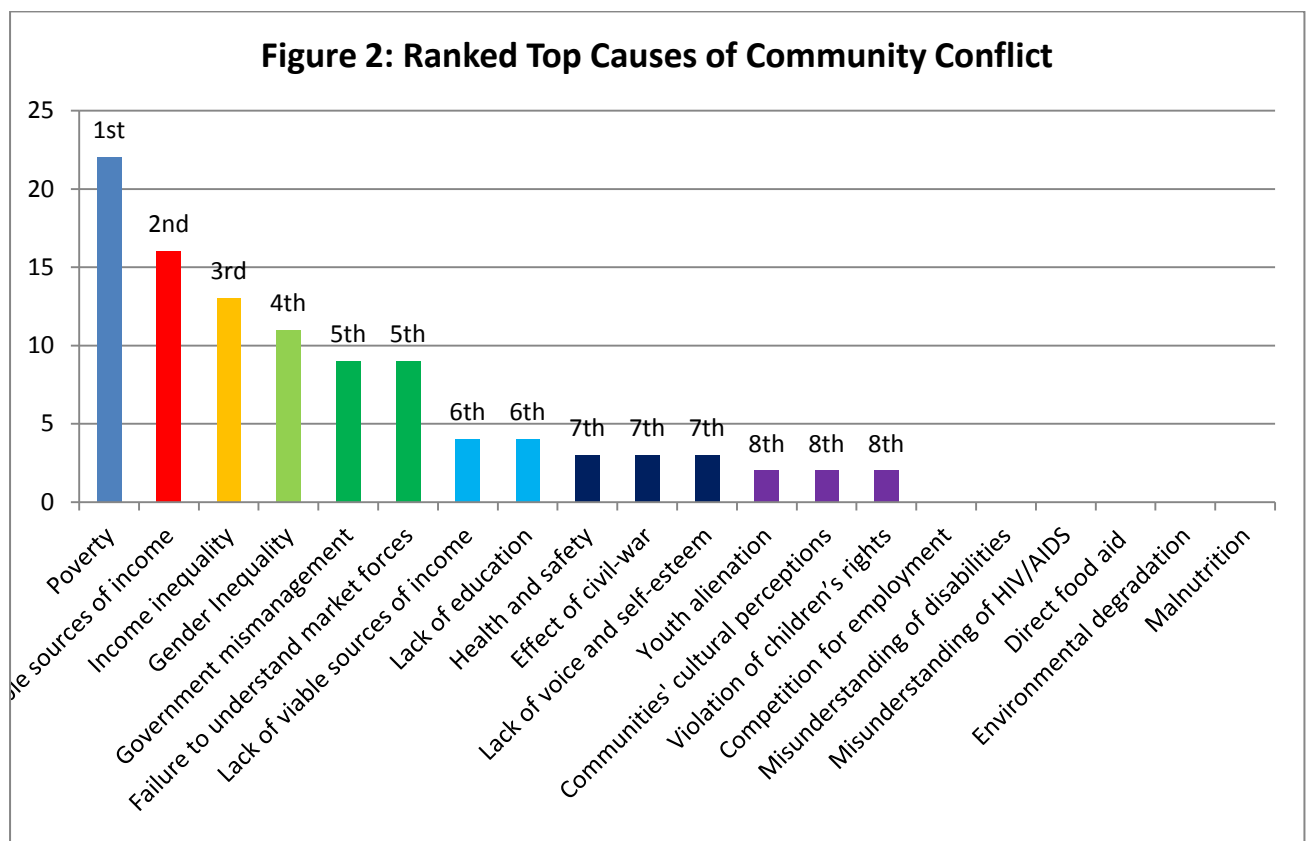
As can be seen in Figure 1 below, across all projects, there was a lot of variation in the responses to the most important causes of pre-project community conflict and this is to be expected given the huge variety of countries and communities in which the projects took place and this certainly explains outliers such as effects of civil war or ethnic minorities.

Figure 1 also shows that there are similarities in the types of conflict causes that are consistently ranked lowest such as Government mismanagement, community perceptions and gender inequality. Feedback from individual projects suggests that close attention should be paid to such low ranking causes of conflict as they can prove to be stumbling blocks to effectiveness once primary causes of conflict are successfully addressed.

**Figure 1: Most common causes of pre-project community conflict**



By ranking questionnaire responses (highest scores given to conflict causes rated one and lowest to those rated 5), the top causes of community conflict were deduced. These are shown in Figure 2 below. Clearly poverty stands out as being a lead cause of community conflict and at a base level this could be attributed to increased competition for scarce local resources. However, it is likely that underlying causes of poverty such as gender inequality and unequal distribution of economic resources, particularly if they are natural resources, increase the risk of conflict. This would explain why unequal sources of income, income inequality and gender inequality were ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. Encouragingly, it seems that expected top causes of community conflict such as poverty and income inequality and less obvious causes such as gender inequality and government mismanagement were all taken into account in individual project planning.



Across all projects, community conflict decreased and this was attributed not just to correctly identifying pre-existing causes of community conflict, but also through identifying where traditional conflict resolution channels were failing and factoring this into project design. Having said this, some projects such as P171 and P181 in tackling pre-identified causes of conflict, actually identified new or more specific sources of community conflict. In both, cases, these were ingrained attitudes within local communities, in the former, a lack of education amongst women and the later, a misunderstanding of the requirements and capabilities of people with disabilities. These were relatively successfully addressed through grass roots education of women's rights and community meetings to enable more opportunities to be provided to community members with disabilities. ***Flexibility to adapt to these 'hidden' sources of community conflict will be important in future projects.***

The Family Health and Sustainable Livelihoods in Sri Lanka project (P170) occurred in the aftermath of prolonged military conflict and so in addition to the more common causes of community conflict described above, tension and distribution of resources between Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim ethnic groups needed to be addressed. This project was also unique in that it involved working alongside existing government area management programmes trying to address inequalities between ethnic groups that were believed to have contributed to the outbreak of conflict. Such schemes often address large scale issues such as provision of infrastructure but can miss community causes of conflicts and as such, government mismanagement was another key source of community conflict. A similar situation also occurred in the Livelihoods for Young People in Uganda (P174) where Government peace talks and mainstream reconstruction efforts only went some way to addressing community causes of conflict.

Government mismanagement also came up in other contexts. In the Vocational Skills Training for Enterprise Capacity in Kenya (P171) project, existing vocational training institutions (VTIs) aiming to provide training to allow people to build sustainable livelihoods suffered from ineffective leadership manifesting in disconnection from local markets and the community. Therefore problems they were intended to help address such as unequal resource distribution were instead addressed by infighting, exclusion and even the use of local leaders to achieve personal goals. Government interventions such as reinforcing rules to increase compliance/ enhance accountability and staff transfers often missed key causes such as gender inequality, poor understanding of market forces on the part of VTIs and lack of dialogue within communities.

A poor grasp of market forces was a key cause of conflict when local economies depended on a limited resource. This was also apparent in the Promoting Rights and Livelihoods of Soapstone Sector Workers in Kenya project (P172). In this case, competition for resources combined with a poor understanding of market factors meant that wealth was unequally distributed and workers suffered from poor health and safety.

Another important theme was ingrained cultural perceptions, often involving gender inequality. For example, the Women Fight Inequality and Destitution in Tanzania project (P169) identified ingrained patriarchy as a major cause of unequally distributed resources. In common with other projects, whilst there was government policy in place at a national level, access at a local level was difficult and many of the poorest women were not aware of their rights. This was echoed in the Reaching Disabled People in Sri Lanka project (P181) where only a few people with disabilities were aware of their rights and government priorities were focussed on national scale post-war re-construction and reconciliation efforts.

### **3.2 Summary of key similarities and differences in project approaches to addressing community conflict**

A key strategy in addressing community conflict evident in multiple projects was the use of capacity building at a local level which could lead to effective community discussion. In the Family Health and Sustainable Livelihoods in Sri Lanka project (P170) this was through strengthening of 36 existing Community Based Organisations (CBOs). Other projects such as Vocational Skills Training for Enterprise Capacity in Kenya (P171) also focussed on restructuring vocational training institutes by strengthening their independence from community leaders and improving transparency of staff recruitment. Opening up the VTI's



through open days and increased communication with the community built better links with local residents and businesses. Again, similar processes of group formation/strengthening of governance structures were used to great effect in Promoting Rights and Livelihoods of Soapstone Sector Workers in Kenya (P172). However, given the overwhelming community dependence on soapstone seen in this project, other strategies to boost dialogue within the community were also employed. These included setting policies and guidelines on how those involved with soapstone could operate and promoting the importance of rights, responsibilities and teamwork to reduce infighting and ensure as much of the wealth from soapstone mining stayed within the community.

Many of the strategies described above were also applied to a post-conflict setting. In Livelihoods for Young People in Uganda (P174) encouraging community dialogue and strengthening government structures through the training of paralegal community volunteers has made a significant impact on post-conflict land disputes (returning refugees unable to agree on pre-conflict boundaries) and enforcing women's rights (particularly for those who lost husbands in the war).

The Rights and Livelihoods for Domestic Workers in Uganda (P179) project also relied on community dialogue and promotion of awareness of rights to improve the livelihoods of domestic workers in Uganda. There were however, some slight differences in how they achieved this, focussing on a media campaign, community outreach sessions and round table discussions between employees and employers to increase awareness of rights and an understanding of how to use local authorities where necessary.

The Women Fight Inequality and Destitution in Tanzania project (P169) attempted to tackle deeply ingrained patriarchy and lack of awareness of women's rights by economically empowering women to meet their families needs and so pre-empt sources of conflict. However, this project also relied strongly on education of women concerning their rights at a grass roots level.

The Reaching Disabled People in Sri Lanka project (P181) also used a grass roots approach in the form of informal self help groups to reach out to disabled people and their communities to promote their rights and abilities. This, together with community consultative meetings which give community members a chance to come up with agreements to provide more opportunities for people with disabilities to exercise their rights and raise a voice against discrimination contributed to a reduction in community tension.

### **3.3 Reflection on the Strengths and Weaknesses of Individual Projects in Preventing Community Conflict**

Much of the feedback from the questionnaires was highly positive and it seems that in general, projects observed falls in the levels of community conflict. It was also overwhelmingly clear that all partner organisations were satisfied with the level of inclusion of community conflict at the project design phase and would not seek to change how conflict was incorporated in future.

Where divisions between ethnic communities were identified as a primary cause of conflict, it was noted by in the Family Health and Sustainable Livelihoods in Sri Lanka project (P170) that community business organisations performed particularly well in encouraging different ethnic groups to interact and reduce conflict.

In other post-conflict projects such as Livelihoods for Young People in Uganda (P174) it was felt that more attention should have been given to providing psycho-social support to communities. On the other hand, a major strength of this project was the fact that it brought about forgiveness and acceptance of former young abductees into the community and in turn restoring hope and confidence to the youth of these communities. This was particularly associated with community dialogue and similar effects were also reported in Reaching Disabled People in Sri Lanka (P181) through community consultation meetings/informal group activities. These also had the effect of re-integrating ex-combatants from the war who had previously been alienated from their community.

It was noted in the feedback from projects such as Vocational Skills and Training for Enterprise Capacity (P171) that there were often underlying secondary causes of conflict in communities that became particularly evident once the primary causes were addressed. It was recommended by at the design stage of each project it would be important to articulate clearly the primary and secondary causes of conflicts among communities and then formulate strategies for conflict resolution embedded in the main activities of the project. It was also noted in the questionnaire feedback that staff training on conflict resolution and appreciation of the cultural perceptions and group dynamics of the target beneficiaries is also useful for consideration at the design stage and initial implementation phase of the project.

Feedback from Rights and Livelihoods for Domestic Workers in Uganda (P179) praised the project for taking into account the different societal aspects that could cause conflict and providing for referral pathways for the victims in case conflicts occurred. There were however, some unexpected problems involved in the delivery of the project. For example, in rare cases, workers who reported abuses by their employers were further intimidated and this should be factored into future project design.

Additionally in P179 there was difficulty in accessing the target group, given the nature of their work. Domestic workers for instance, are mostly undocumented and inaccessible in closed homes, and have limited access to information on their work and their rights, such as media informatics. Given the Importance of promoting awareness of rights across multiple projects, this feedback is important to consider in all future project design.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The main causes of community conflict across all projects included poverty, lack of sustainable sources of income, income inequality and gender inequality. However, it is important to appreciate the importance of underlying factors, such as Government mismanagement and ingrained community perceptions, which can become major issues once primary causal factors have been addressed. This is something that became clear as the projects ran and that should be considered in advance of all future projects.

Some of the best approaches to resolving community conflict involved local capacity building, be this in the form of business development, training institutes or government institutions as these promoted community dialogue and facilitated better distribution of resources through arbitration, regulation and training. Indeed, forums for dialogue were universally of great significance and informal focus groups and round table meetings were particularly beneficial to women and people with disabilities at a grass roots level in terms of promoting rights and changing deep rooted community misconceptions.

On reflection, all of the projects appeared to have factored in the primary causes for community conflict into their original planning and were successful in addressing these causes. Whilst all partner organisations contacted were happy with the existing strategies to integrate conflict into project planning, there are some key points that could improve this process in future projects:

- Clearly articulating the primary and secondary causes of conflicts among communities and then formulate strategies for conflict resolution embedded in the main activities of the project.
- Staff training on conflict resolution and appreciation of the cultural perceptions and group dynamics of the target beneficiaries should be considered at the design stage and initial implementation phase of the project.
- Other feedback was case specific and included recommendations that in post-conflict areas the provision of psycho-social support to communities was important. In areas working with hard to reach groups such as domestic workers, it was noted that traditional marketing campaigns to boost awareness of rights were often less successful and this should be factored into future project design.

## Annexe A: Questionnaire

Name of person filling in questionnaire:

\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please email the completed questionnaire by the 9th August to:**

Chris Capper, student intern working on behalf of APT

[capper.csg@gmail.com](mailto:capper.csg@gmail.com)

## Questionnaire for project

Please place an X in the empty box for the relevant project this questionnaire applies to for you.

| Place X in the relevant box below | Project title   | Partner                       | APT project number |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                   | Life in Nambale   | REEP                          | P168               |
|                                   | Women fight inequality and destitution                      | KWIEKO, Tanzania              | P179               |
|                                   | Family Health   | Business Creations, Sri Lanka | P170               |
|                                   | Vocational skills training for enterprise capacity (VOSTEC) | SITE, Kenya                   | P171               |
|                                   | Rights and livelihoods for soapstone workers                | SITE, Kenya                   | P172               |
|                                   | Livelihoods for young people                                | VEDCO, Heifer, Uganda         | P174               |
|                                   | Livelihoods for young people                                | MAPCO, Sierra Leone           | P175               |
|                                   | VTCs for employment and enterprise                          | Help Salone                   | P176               |
|                                   | Rights and livelihoods for domestic workers                 | PLA, Uganda                   | P179               |
|                                   | Reaching disabled people                                    | CBTD, Sri Lanka               | P181               |

## Section 1: The situation before the project started

This section looks at conflicts before the project. It aims to develop an understanding of the root causes of conflict and to help identify how they have changed or been resolved.

### 1. How would you define 'the root causes of conflict' in the communities where your project operates or operated before the project started?

Answer:

### 2. Please rate up to 5 root causes of conflict from the following list.

Number them from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important and so on up to a maximum of 5.

|                                       |                          |                                |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Income inequality                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Misunderstanding of HIV/AIDS   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health and safety                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lack of voice and self-esteem  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Competition for employment            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gender inequality              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Government mismanagement              | <input type="checkbox"/> | Violation of children's rights | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Misunderstanding of disabilities      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Direct food aid                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Youth alienation                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lack of education              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Effect of civil-war                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Poverty                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of viable sources of income      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Environmental degradation      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Communities' cultural perceptions     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Malnutrition                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of sustainable sources of income | <input type="checkbox"/> | Failure to understand market   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 3. Were there any localised conflicts in the communities before the project began and what were the causes of the conflict?

Answer:

### 4. How were these conflicts resolved before the project started?

Answer:

- 5. What conflict issues, if any, do you think were taken into account in the design of the project and why?**

Answer:

## **Section 2: The Project**

This section reviews the project's ability to combat the root causes of conflict.

- 6. Since the implementation of the project what do you think are the main causes of conflict within the communities?**

Answer:

- 7. Has conflict increased or decreased?**

Answer:

- 8. Why do you think this?**

Answer:

- 9. Has there been any change in the way conflicts are resolved since the implementation of the project?**

Answer:

- 10. How has this changed?**

Answer:

**11. What do you think are the most successful ways in which conflicts have been resolved?**

Answer:

### **Section 3: Involving vulnerable groups**

This section addresses the pre and post involvement of vulnerable people in conflict resolution.

**12. How are young people (youths) involved in resolving conflict? How has this changed since the implementation of the project?**

Answer:

**13. How are women involved in conflict resolution? How has this changed?**

Answer:

**14. How are people with disabilities or HIV/AIDS involved in conflict resolution? How has this changed?**

Answer:

## Section 4: Reflection

This section offers an opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the project. Explain what positive outcomes may be derived from this project and what you would like see in the future.

**15. Please outline any unexpected outcomes that have happened in your project regarding conflict resolution.**

Answer:

**16. In hind-sight do you think the project should have been designed differently to address conflict and how?**

Answer:

**17. Please provide a case study or testimonies of the positive work that you have performed relating to conflict resolution in communities?**

Answer:

**Thank you for filling in this questionnaire**

**Please email the completed questionnaire by the 9<sup>th</sup> August to:**

Chris Capper, student intern, working on behalf of APT.

[capper.csg@gmail.com](mailto:capper.csg@gmail.com)



## Annexe B: Project profiles

### **P169 Women Fight Inequality and Destitution in Tanzania**

**Partner:** KWIECO

**Donor:** DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund

**Duration:** June 2008 to May 2012

The aim of this project is to empower women in Kilimanjaro Region of Tanzania to address the inequality in society and their severe levels of poverty.

The purpose is to enable vulnerable women to tackle the discrimination and abuse of rights they face (including loss of ownership of land, property and other assets after the death of their spouses, HIV/AIDS discrimination, and/or gender based violence) by influencing patriarchal attitudes, customs, practices, decision-making structures and processes to become more gender equitable. Enabling a critical mass of vulnerable women to generate an income in order to be in a position to afford the cost of attempting legal redress, the project aims to achieve a balance between addressing basic needs in order to access their rights.

### **P170 Family Health and Sustainable Livelihoods in Sri Lanka**

**Partner:** Business Creations

**Donor:** Big Lottery

**Duration:** March 2009 to February 2011

The project targets 2500 poor and vulnerable households of the southern coast of the Hambantota District in Sri Lanka. This region was heavily damaged by the tsunami and is one of the poorest districts in the country, with 32% of its people living under the poverty line. The project will help people to obtain sustainable livelihoods, and to improve the health and living conditions of their communities. The most disadvantaged will be targeted; including widows and people with disabilities.

### **P.171 Vocational Skills Training for Enterprise Capacity, Kenya**

**Partner:** SITE

**Donor:** European Commission and European Trusts

**Duration:** January 2010 – December 2012

The overall objective is to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development in Kenya by increasing employability and economic productivity of disadvantaged young men and women in rural areas. This will be achieved through a pilot project strengthening the organisational and technical capacities of six village polytechnics in Kitui., Mbooni East, Mwala and Makueni districts of Eastern Province such that they provide quality market-driven skills training to disadvantaged school leavers and micro and small entrepreneurs. A total of 3,060 young men and women will receive relevant skills for the job market.

### **P172 Promoting Rights and Livelihoods of Soapstone Sector Workers in Kenya**

**Partner:** SEEDS

**Donor:** DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund

**Duration:** July 2010 to February 2014

The project aims to address inequalities within the Kisii stone sector, not only seeking to empower different categories of soapstone workers to demand and secure safer and more favourable working

conditions, but also to access a greater and fairer share of the income that the industry generates. The primary targets are 12,000 soapstone workers, including miners, carvers and finishers, whose collectives, co-operatives and associations will be supported to become stronger organisations, better able to represent the rights, needs and concerns of their members. The project will also work to encourage employers' associations and regulators to comply with national and international labour standards and the requirements of importers and alternative trade organisations.

#### **P174 Livelihoods for Young People in Uganda**

**Partner: VEDCO**

**Donor: Comic Relief**

**Duration: August 2010 to July 2014**

Over 20 years of conflict involving the "Lord's Resistance Army" (LRA) and government forces in northern Uganda has displaced and impoverished much of the population. Boys and young men were forced to fight by the LRA or flee, while many girls and young women suffered sexual exploitation and/or physical violence. Most of these young people do not have viable sources of income, and without skills, self-esteem or a voice, do not participate in livelihoods development programmes, perpetuating their vulnerability.

This project builds on and demonstrates successful approaches to enabling access to sustainable livelihoods based on crop and livestock production, in Pader district, focussing on youth. 600 young people (60% female) and 100 households with vulnerable children (600 people) will benefit from stable incomes and food security. These young role models success will be promoted, building inclusion and confidence in young people and their capacity to advocate for their needs.

#### **P175 Livelihoods for Young People in Sierra Leone**

**Partner: MAPCO**

**Donor: Comic Relief**

**Duration: November 2010 to October 2013**

Overall Aim: An improved livelihood environment addressing the needs of children and young people affected by conflict.

By the end of 2013: the economic status of 800 young people and 1200 families (4,800 adults) will be improved with 4000 children and young people (from the target families) supported to attend school and/or receive functional literacy education; greater awareness of the rights of children and young people will increase their participation in family/community decision making. MAPCO will have increased capacity to apply for/ deliver development projects to a wider spectrum of donors and be able to measure the impact of its work more effectively.

#### **179 Rights and Livelihoods for Domestic Workers in Uganda**

**Partner: Platform for Labour Action (PLA)**

**Donor: Comic Relief**

**Duration: May 2012 to April 2015**

Project objectives by the end of year 3: 5,000 women and girls who are employed as domestic workers: have increased awareness of their human rights and the support services and institutions from which to seek redress when faced with exploitation or abuse (emotional, verbal, psychological, and economic) from their employers;

Up to 3 million households where domestic workers are employed will also have increased awareness of the rights of domestic workers and there will be anecdotal evidence of better treatment of them as a result of this;

At least 450 women and girls domestic workers will be linked to other domestic workers including a “peer educator” for mutual support to other service providers in informal groups and consequently less isolated and vulnerable to abuse;

PLA’s institutional capacity will have been strengthened to: facilitate market led income generating activities; adapt their techniques to facilitate the development of self-help groups to reach women and girl domestic workers.

**P181 Reaching Disabled People in Sri Lanka**

**Partner: CBTD**

**Donor: Big Lottery Fund**

**Duration: September 2012 to August 2016**

This four-year project aims to reduce discrimination and poverty among 2,200 disabled women and men in post-conflict eastern Sri Lanka by enabling them to participate in reconstruction and economic recovery programmes, as well as in their own communities. Key project outcomes are for 500 disabled people (40% female) to secure employment or self-employment, 60% of whom will earn at least LKR5,000 (GBP25) per month; 18 government agencies, NGOs and CSOs supported to make their reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes accessible to, and inclusive of, disabled people; and community attitudes and behaviour to be more inclusive of disabled women and men, thereby improving their social and economic opportunities. The latter two of these outcomes will be evidenced by at least ten disabled people appointed to decision making positions and a 30% increase in the number of disabled people accessing CSO programmes, while 6,000 people will be reached through project activities to increase public awareness of the rights and potential of disabled people.