

History of NVC in Kenya – respective Rusinga Island

Names have been changed or abbreviated to protect the privacy of the people mentioned.

2007

Peter had invited NVC trainers through *M.* from Estonia, knowing her through the Global Ecovillage Network

J.K. (NL) and *M. F. (USA)* started sharing NVC on Rusinga Island in August, *Irmtraud Kauschat* and *YC (both D)* sharing NVC on Rusinga,

The participants, about 20, were nearly the same in both trainings. Among others there were four who are still engaged in NVC

2007/2008 (end of Dec-beginning of Jan)

J.K. on Rusinga, experienced the postelection violence in such that he had to rent a private airplane to get to Nairobi from Rusinga because the roads were blocked by people having erected barricades, killing people of other tribes.

On Rusinga it stayed calm, one of the participants told us he had stood up to calm participants of a meeting (*baraza*) down, when people from mainland Mbita came to convince them to participate in violence. He told us this was because of the NVC training he had undergone he had realized that they would not gain anything by violence.

2008 (July/August)

Irmtraud Kauschat, together with *Christiane W.*, *Heike L.*, *I. P.* (for Sociocracy training for *Badilisha*) went to Rusinga again.

We offered trainings to two groups, *Irmtraud* to the ones who had been attending the first training in 2007. *Heike* and *Christiane* worked with the youth group, also about 20 participants, among them, some of them are still actively sharing and supporting NVC on Rusinga.

Heike and *Irmtraud* stayed for one more week in Nairobi to work with a group of about 100 people, many of them members of a project caring for people with HIV/AIDS (*Caren's gardens*), other from different communities who were organized through *Better Chance Africa (Kaytel)*, with whom we went to *Nakuru-Lanet* in 2009) with connections to the Catholic Church and the Red Cross. We were mainly dealing with pain around the traumatic experiences during the post-election violence.

This was when we met a young student first, who later organized trainings in Nairobi, *Nakuru-Rongai* and *Eldoret-Kuinet*.

We also met with about 30 young people from the Catholic Youth group for training, the main topic being about the impact of the post-election violence. For example having been evicted from home, having missed school or university for some months....

In December *J.K.* had appointed two youth from Rusinga Island as NVC coordinators, meaning to coordinate the then 10 practice groups and with *Jan* and me.

2009

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Irmtraud Kauschat and *Christiane W.* went back to Kenya, first to Nakuru-Lanet, where about 100 participants attended the training from 15 different congregations of different Christian faiths who otherwise would never had met in one room and five different tribes/ethnic background. Kayte from Better Chance Africa had organized this event .

There we offered not only “classical” NVC training but reconciliation through what I call “*Empathic Listening to Her-story/Hi-story*”. Each of the groups with common ethnic background were asked to name a representative who would tell their experience during the post-election violence from their point of view and the whole audience would guess the unmet needs. This was a very powerful experience for all of them who expressed themselves afterwards. Since then I am working with this tool, which supports connection by perceiving the other one as a human being with the same needs.

On Rusinga we offered some trainings in different parts and were able to conduct a *residential training* for about 30 people coming from different parts of Kenya due to donation. About 50% came from Rusinga, 4 from Mfangano Island, where *Jan* had been offering trainings since 2008.

We repeated the “*Empathic Listening to Her-story/Hi-story*”, which again supported deep connection.

After this event we started a NVC-yahoo group to share and stay connected.

In December *J.C.* from the USA came to Nairobi and Rusinga offering NVC trainings and Restorative Circles.

2010

Irmtraud Kauschat and *Christiane We* together with their colleague *N. L-K.* went back to Kenya, first to Nakuru-Rongai, another place near Nakuru. We offered training to about 70 people, parents of children attending the same school. About 50% of the parents are locals, the others IDP's (internally displaced people due to the post-election violence), there was tension between the two communities, the number of pupils had nearly doubled. Both of them belong to the Kikuyu ethnicity.

Two of the participants were members of a different ethnic background (Kalendjin), the one who was responsible for most of the evictions of the elections. There was tension in the beginning.

It changed after they told of their experience that one of their young men had been hacked to death and another one seriously injured after drinking with young men from the other community (Kikuyu).

They had come late to the training because it took them 2 days to calm down their community not going for revenge. After having shared this the tension was gone and they even hugged each other when they parted after the training.

The next stop was Eldoret-Kuinet, which had been a hot spot during the post-election violence. This time we met people from the Kalendjin tribe. We met with about 50-70 people for the training listening to their pain belonging to a tribe that had executed so much violence. Some of the youth having been threatened to join the violent groups which was also traumatizing, one having been “mistaken” and beaten up because his skin is lighter and he doesn't speak the tribal language. In the end his ID saved him stating that he is a member of the Kalendjin ethnicity. *N. L.-K.* left after this training.

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Christiane and I continued to Rusinga, where we were offering some training and realized that there was so much pain around the disconnection with Badilisha that we spent one whole day listening to the different stories, empathizing with the NVC community members. It became very clear that there was need for much more despair work.

We also went to Mfangano Island offering NVC training with about 30 people. We found that they already met in at least two practice groups. Most of them are members of the Ekiola Kiona Centre.

In Nairobi we met people from the practice group and others who were interested in NVC, about 12 in total.

Those who participated enjoyed the training and some are still very active in Nairobi and other parts where they are living now.

When I came back to Kenya in December 2010 we met again with the coordinators of the different groups.

Dave was the only one of the team who had worked on the constitution together with a friend, who is a lawyer. *R.* had not been available due to different reasons.

2011

In 2011 *Christiane and I* decided not to follow the idea of creating an all-Kenyan network but just offering a deepening training for participants we already knew from the different parts of Kenya. People cared for their travel expenses, the Rusingans offered free accommodation and we had enough funds to offer food. So everybody contributed to the training, which I very much appreciate. We met for 6 days. In the beginning we were somewhat confused finding that not much of the concept of requests was present. But then we got to deep connection through role-plays and I was satisfied with what we gained, especially in terms of connection, even as some of the people involved in the past conflicts were not present. I hope we will eventually support connection between them as well in the future.

This year *Aline M.* supported us, a student of ethnology who is writing her magister thesis on the impact NVC had on people from Rusinga. For this she interviewed about 30 former participants and their family members. I am looking forward to this evaluation.

Christiane went to Mfangano for some days while I stayed on Rusinga. So we were able to support a greater number of people with NVC trainings.

Back in Nairobi I met a group of elders from the north of Kenya, members of 2 different tribes, who have been fighting and killing each other and raiding cattle for more than 20 years. One of the participants from the Nairobi training in 2010 is working there as a volunteer. We had been discussing if NVC would be supportive and she wanted to give it a try, even if she was not very hopeful, because there had been already meetings with the government and other NGOs, which had not contributed to peace.

When she asked me what to tell them I told her: Let them know I am willing to listen to their pain and hope that the elders of the other tribe will do so as well. This must have seemed appealing enough for them to come to Nairobi.

We started with some sentences about NVC after the introduction, me sharing that the most important aspect of NVC is that we all are human beings with the

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same needs. Then we went to what they called the “causes of the violence” and arrived at the needs they want to meet by killing members of the other tribe. They were surprised to discover that they try to meet the same needs: safety, food, health, and education for their children. We then tried to identify strategies and they went back home with some ideas what to do next: including the youth – who are mainly responsible for the violence – and the women, which is something really new, because these groups had not been involved in meetings before. Aline went to this place to meet them before she left Kenya in October and found out that the situation of these people had changed already because their need for recognition had been met by simply being invited to the meeting, They also started to restore a well (both tribes together). And I got the information that from the beginning of August till now there had been only one outbreak of violence in October, which is very little compared to recent times. At another time the people of one tribe got to know about plan for an attack to people of the other tribe and warned them. Sadly in the beginning of January 2012 there had been an outbreak of violence and two people were killed.