

DEFROSTING THE FROZEN LIVES: TURNING SOUTH SUDANESE URBAN REFUGEE YOUTH COMMUNITY LEADERS INTO COMMUNITY AGENTS OF POSITIVE PEACE IN KENYA.

"Engaging Young people in impactful community peacebuilding initiatives is the best way South Sudan has of getting out of its current dark realities" were the opening remarks given by Dr. John Reuver a former International Protection Officer for the Nonviolent Peace force in South Sudan, and the current World beyond war Executive Finance director,

Dr. Reur who has worked extensively with South Sudanese communities on the areas of community peace actions Was Zooming in from his home in Vermont on 4/12/2021 as part of his virtual address to the attendees of the South Sudanese Urban refugees Youth Peace Leadership training workshop that was part of the Inaugural Global Peace Education and action for impact, a Global cross-cultural, Intergenerational peace Building initiative by the World beyond war Organization and Rotary Peace International held in Light House Church Kapsuya Estate Eldoret Kenya.

The one-day workshop was organized by Sixty Four Voices Organization a South Sudanese refugee Youth Community Based Organization and had over 100 participants made up of Young community leaders representing their various south Sudanese communities in Eldoret.

According to Mr. Bior Garang one of the workshop facilitators and a community mobilizer "Eldoret is one of Kenya's urban towns with the largest and longest residing populations of South Sudanese Urban refugee's communities and boasts of a strong south Sudanese presence with over 8000 community members and close to 95% being Young People of South Sudan Origin, this population if well captured & turned into peace agents can be a game-changer in promoting impactful community peace forces in South Sudan".

The workshop that ran under the theme of DEFROSTING THE FROZEN LIVES: TURNING SOUTH SUDANESE URBAN REFUGEE YOUTH COMMUNITY LEADERS INTO COMMUNITY AGENTS OF POSITIVE PEACE IN KENYA, found its inspiration from the facts that In their over 30years of existence in Kenya the South Sudanese Urban refugees and communities have been faced with unique challenges specific to them, with one of the most unique characteristics being that Most of these families are extended and comprise of one or two caregivers or guardians and several youths of school-going age,

a majority of the families have one constant caregiver usually the women who live with them, since the men are the breadwinners and work in South Sudan or in other countries notably the USA Canada Australia, or new Zealand where they have asylum, the youths are more than often left to their devices with no adult supervision or mentorship and many male youths suffer from the absence of any male figure role model in their lives this has resulted in many losing focus in their studies resorting to gambling truancy drug abuse and a host of other social vices to fill these emotional vacuums,

given the cultural dynamics in south Sudanese communities, most of the girl child youths are exposed to further disadvantage through them being forced to adopt adult roles of looking after the families at a tender age and thus have no time to enjoy their youth and childhoods becoming maladjusted adults who pass on the same vices to the subsequent generations creating a kind of social permafrost where lives/hopes /dreams are frozen in a cycle of uncertainty with few not willing to soon go back to South Sudan and at the same time not finding the needed support to live meaningfully from their host communities <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/world/article/2001417940/mixed-feelings-as-south-sudan-marks-10th-independence-day>.

An example of this problem was the recent disturbing headlines in one of Kenya's south Sudanese urban refugees' most populated Estate in Eldoret town Uasinghishu County <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVNjUOEIClk>



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left is the YouTube logo with a 'KE' flag. A search bar is located at the top center. The video frame shows a woman, identified as Faustine Achieng, a Kapsoya village elder, speaking in a market setting. The video title is 'Refugees from South Sudan turn Kapsoya estate in Eldoret into a criminal hub'. Below the title, it shows 833 views and the date Mar 18, 2021. The video has 7 likes and 15 comments. The Nation Kenya logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the video frame. Below the video, the Nation Kenya channel logo and name are shown, along with 594K subscribers and a 'SUBSCRIBE' button. The website URL <http://www.nation.co.ke> is also displayed.

The Overall aim of the Youth leader's peace and leadership training workshop was to act as a Youth Peer to peer interactive workshop to impart peaceful ways of coexistence and deliver mentoring thematic talks Conflict mitigation, peacebuilding, and psychosocial counseling on the communities Young Leaders who will act as peace agents of change in their communities.

The event was attended by leading local Youth groups Including Kenya Rotary Peace Chapter Miss Whitney Mwenje, and a host of community and Youth trainers who worked for years in South Sudan or with South Sudanese communities.

Mr. Gabriel Dak one of The organizers of the workshop thought that it was a timely intervention given that in November 2021 Kenya's President Kenyatta Signed into law the Refugee Bill (<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/uhuru-signs-into-law-refugee-bill-3622276>), that gave renewed hope to over 500,000 refugees living in Kenya to have access to education, livelihoods, and integration opportunities, and given that South Sudanese are the majority of these refugee communities, their contributions will be of paramount importance both in Kenya and South Sudan.