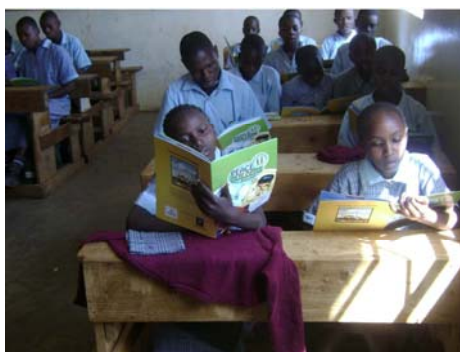




## SUCCESS STORY

### Promoting Reconciliation through Schools



USAID/OTI/KENYA

Students at Kamukunki School studying the August 7th Memorial Park's peace-building workbooks.

***"I am a Sudanese and we came to Kenya because there is war in Sudan. If you fight, where will we go?"***

**—Student at Central Primary School in Eldoret**

***"The club has enabled us to have a different view of fellow students from other communities and reduce tension and suspicion that had been built during the post-election violence. At first, we could not sit together; we could not play together with those from other communities. But today the situation has changed and we eat and share nearly everything."***

**—Victor Kipkemboi, a Kiambaa Primary School student**

**April 2009** – On January 2, 2008, the world awoke to the horrific story of 40 people burned to death in the Kiambaa Church near Eldoret in Kenya. At the height of the post-election violence that claimed many lives and left tens of thousands homeless, the victims were seeking refuge in the church. Among the survivors were school children who still bear the scars of that fateful night.

When the Kiambaa Primary School reopened in June 2008, only eight pupils showed up. Fear and suspicion was rife among students and teachers alike, and the memories of the incident were too painful for many to bear. Sensing an opportunity for reconciliation, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) helped establish a peace club at the school, and the club has enabled the school community to create space for interaction between the different communities living in Kiambaa.

Peace clubs were first established by the August 7th Memorial Trust, a local nongovernmental organization founded after the tragic U.S. Embassy bombing in Nairobi in August 1998. The clubs operate on the premise that long-term peace and stability is possible in Kenya only if the people have concrete means to resolve conflict—means other than violence.

Victor Kipkemboi, a Kiambaa student, said that he and his classmates are taking the message of peace and reconciliation home to their parents with the aim of challenging attitudes of mistrust and encouraging those who were displaced to resettle.

Peace club members organized drama and music activities for parents, and these activities have, in turn, created opportunities for parents to share experiences with their neighbors as part of the process of healing the wounds left by the church burning in particular and the post-election violence in general.

Studies have shown that violence has declined in schools where peace clubs are active. And at the Kiambaa School, enrollment has increased to 436 pupils.

The Trust has not only established a Memorial Park to commemorate the Embassy bombing victims but also promoted the peaceful resolution of conflict by initiating peace clubs—with OTI support—in 20 Uasin District primary schools, including Kiambaa, and 14 schools in Nairobi.

For more information on peace building through peace clubs, see [www.memorialparkkenya.org](http://www.memorialparkkenya.org).