

## Don't Give Us A Fish; Show Us How to Fish

Mburugu Gikunda, of Media Focus on Africa is the co- Executive Producer of *The Team* project in Kenya. For over a decade, Gikunda has been a leader in the television industry in Nairobi. His engagement with Media Focus on Africa Foundation, an NGO dedicated to the development of media, came about because he had a strong desire to use media as a tool for positive change in his country. After the post-election violence, that drive to help change was stronger than ever. When Search for Common Ground proposed a partnership to make the Team project via the GTF grant, Gikunda jumped at the chance.

Creation of the television and radio series was, in some ways, easy for an experienced producer like Gikunda. However, to encourage viewers and listeners from fragile areas to *take action* was a different challenge and one that would not be easy. SFCG often uses television and radio shows as tools but often the mobile cinema series are created for large audiences. The objective for The Team was to encourage our targeted audiences --- youth --- to change their attitudes and behavior which meant that we had to create a more intimate setting. From these ideas the mobile cinema and dialogue project was born. Gikunda targeted the 8 areas most impacted by the post election violence as the starting point. Kenyans by the thousands had fled their homes. Trust between tribes was non-existent. Police and local authorities were looked upon as the enemy. It was critically important for Kenyans to start to talk to one another lest violence begin again and yet there was no forum for these discussions. One had to be created.

Youth leaders from Naivasha, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kakamega, Kisumu, Mombasa, Kibera and Mithare were asked to hold screenings of the Team which were followed by dialogue sessions during which participants discussed the issues they saw on the screen. The participants were also youth leaders – 70-100 – per location. It was an anxious time because the wounds of the violence were fresh. Slowly, people began to open up.

Gikunda had never been involved in this type of activity before. “It provided me with an opportunity to engage differently in a what was otherwise a difficult situation. The project made it possible for me to show Kenyans how best to deal with their problems What **The Team** did for me particularly was provide me with an opportunity to demonstrate the alternatives. Problems can be handled in a non-violent way.”

The idea captured the imaginations of the youth in every location. From the original 700 participants, by the end of season 2, we had grown to 60,000 participants. The project blossomed even further and we've retained the original youth leaders. Gikunda says, “We have noticed considerable growth among the youth in the communities we've worked with. They were empowered to take charge of their lives and as a result they began to thinking of income generating activities. Using the Team series as a tool, they started by writing proposals in order to get funding from donors for other peace building projects. However, one thing led to another and now they've started commercial businesses. One group started a car wash business. In Naivasha they started a dance troupe that performs for tourists at the tourist hotels. Now that they are empowered,

they can now look for opportunities. It's a self-imposed condition that all of the groups must be inclusive of gender and tribe.”

The Team project is going strong and in the run up to the election in 2013, it is expanding to include 8 new areas that are considered at-risk for violence. The youth leaders who started it all have had a strong hand in creating the new program. “The youth who became involved with *The Team* have seen and believed in the possibility of change. Now the youth are committed to pull in the same direction. And where there was no hope, now they have seen hope.”

“The project worked because we were not prescriptive: we gave them the tools to leverage the conversation --- the TV series ---- but the youth leaders took it from there. They felt empowered; they felt recognized. We accorded them the respect that they never had. The idea is: Don't give us fish; show us how to fish. “