

“WE ARE ALL THIS, AND MORE”

Body mapping as journeys of self-reflection





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Originally told in the first languages of the Body Map artists, the self-reflections included here have been carefully translated into English for this publication. While all efforts have been made to guarantee accuracy, nonetheless inaccuracies may still have been inadvertently captured in the process of transcription and translation. In some cases, the personal narratives accompanying the Body Maps have been slightly abridged. Where necessary, clarifications have also been inserted in square brackets. Some of the names of the contributing artists are pseudonyms chosen by the artists themselves, each of whom have given their full permission to use their Body Maps and self-reflections in this book. It should also be noted that ethnic or other identity aspects, such as age, are only referred to when and in the wording as used by the artists themselves.

“We are all this, and more” – Body Mapping as Journeys of Self-Reflection

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FOREWORD

Art as Awakening

Who am I as a Kenyan and as an agent for peace?
Where do I come from? How do I see myself? How do I
view others? What are my shining and hard moments as
a Kenyan citizen? And what is my biggest goal in life?

These five days were like a journey through my life and
my Kenya. I shared ideas and feelings about my Kenyan
identity, something that is completely absent for most
of us. There is that different version of us... I am myself
and the others at the same time. Each and every day
of the Body Mapping process was an opportunity to
share stories about ourselves and our communities. The
challenges and the beauties of our lives. And day after
day, we painted all this on a big canvas.

We were 12 people from Garissa County. I remember
how it all started. That strange question about how I
would write and draw my name in an artistic way. And
the same day, having to draw our response to this
question: if you were an animal, which animal would
you be? I thought for a moment and then I immediately
became a monkey. This animal can be shy and
aggressive, funny and clever. It shares my own character,
my society and my behaviour. A monkey only stays
with its peers and does not want to mingle with others.
At the same time, a monkey tries to adapt to all the
changes going on around it.

I have enjoyed the process and I have learnt from it. I
have learnt that I am not alone. That we don't only have
differences but we also have many things in common,
which are worthy of being shared and appreciated.
About what is important as a citizen, as a male or a

female, as pastoralists, farmers, whether from urban
settlements or the bush. We Kenyans. We are all this,
and more.

We like to fight. Some groups of people, like Boranas,
Somalis and Pokomos, have coexistence problems.
There are problems within the Somali community, as
well. Conflicts emerge as a result of language barriers,
border disputes, lack of resources, and mistrust and
misunderstanding, all of which lead to blood and tears.

This Body Mapping process has helped me question
my prejudices. It also created a new way to dialogue—
based on knowing, accepting and celebrating the
people of Kenya. Since the first day of the Body
Mapping process, I followed up the ideas in my
mind, which has brought me to another level of
understanding.

In my Body Map, there is my self-esteem, the self-love I
have, my struggles and a Kenya that is larger than me. I
gave myself green feet and a red face. To paint Kenya in
my colours with my own words.

My Body Map looks like me.

Up until yesterday, there was probably a sleeping giant
inside me. Body Mapping gave me the opportunity to
awaken this giant.

*Absame, thirty-two-year-old male
January 12th 2017, Garissa town*

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Art is transformative. It can open up and expand the worldviews of individuals and communities, challenging and changing given assumptions about oneself and diverse others.

Artistic practices can increase understanding of different perspectives, creating greater empathy and inclusion. Art is especially useful for developing alternative visions of peaceful coexistence between people.

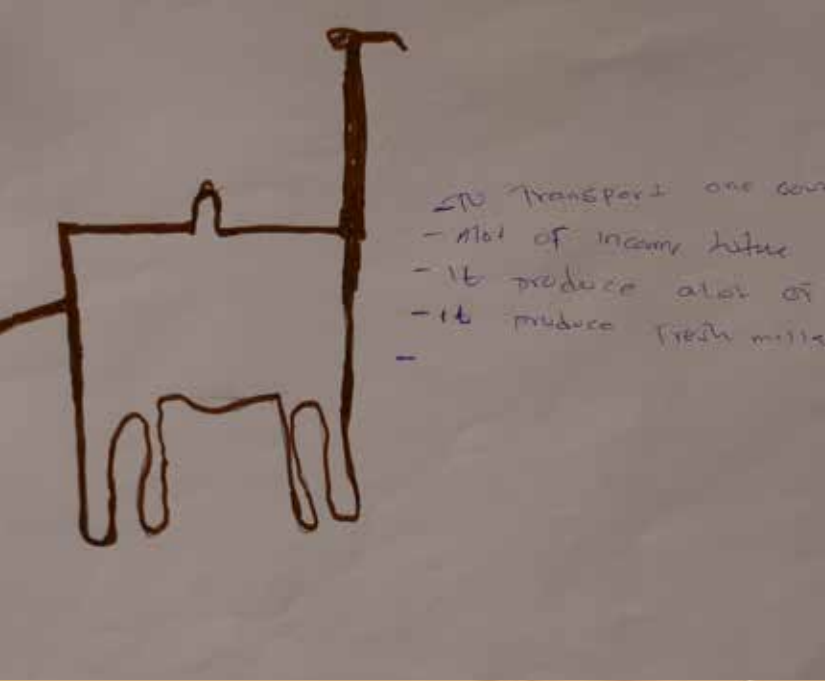
This book presents the self-reflections of eight Kenyans living in Garissa County in north-eastern Kenya. Between 2016 to 2018, they participated, along with 136 other young women and men, in dialogue processes supported by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) and the Garissa branch of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM). Artistic approaches, including drawing, drama, songs and poetry, were incorporated into these dialogues as alternative forms of expression around issues related to the challenges of insecurity and identity in Garissa County. Using art builds on the understanding that peacebuilding requires forms of personal and group reflection and expression that go beyond words and logic. It also respects and values the place of arts and culture in Kenyan society.

The personal narratives and Body Maps included here have been selected with the aim of providing a broad view of the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of the participants. They are organised in three parts that tell a larger story about identity and inclusion in Garissa County. The Body Mapping artists explore these themes amidst the ongoing process of the devolution of power in Kenya, begun in 2013, and the need for greater national cohesion in this changing political and cultural environment.

In Part 1, entitled *Diverse Identities*, three self-reflections and Body Maps capture the very different experiences of life in Garissa County, depending on who you are and from whence you come. Part 2, *Resilience amidst Violence*, presents two personal narratives of strength, perseverance and survival, emphasising the necessity of both continued dialogue and an appreciation of Kenya's diversity to build peace amidst insecurity and violent conflict. In Part 3, *Hope for the Future*, three of the artists exuberantly share their visions for themselves as agents of change and their aspirations for a Kenya that is inclusive of all its citizens.

Taken together, these Body Maps and the self-reflections that accompany them create an intimate portrait of life in Garissa, as seen through the eyes of these young artists. By documenting and preserving the use of Body Mapping in the words and images of these eight artists, this book also contributes to a growing body of literature on the use of artistic approaches in peacebuilding practice, which is increasingly common throughout the world¹. Many artists who seek to promote social and political change through their creative works likewise address issues of conflict, resistance, justice, equality, peace, hope and reconciliation. Moreover, the connections between artistic creativity, cultural heritage, social cohesion and sustainable development are widely recognized. The Body Maps and self-reflections presented here exemplify these inter-relationships.

¹ <https://www.usip.org/insights-newsletter/the-arts-and-peacebuilding-emerging-approach>





What is Body Mapping?

Body Mapping is a creative art-based methodology that draws together lived experiences and visual artistic expression. It uses artwork, imagination and guided visualisation. Artistic activities are interwoven with personal storytelling, meditative and reflective exercises, deep listening, and group discussion and dialogue. The primary purpose of Body Mapping is to enable self-exploration and the sharing of personal experiences about life and the surrounding environment in a safe and confidential group setting.

Put into practice, Body Mapping involves tracing a life-size representation of one's body onto a large surface or canvass. The person to whom the Body Map belongs then adds colours, pictures, symbols or words to show the path she or he has taken throughout life. Body Maps are typically accompanied by a narrative (spoken or written) that explains the artwork. The final artworks are often exhibited in public to stimulate broader community engagement on issues related to identity and inclusion.

Body Mapping takes place in a five-day workshop with no more than 12 participants. The workshop uses activities that are experiential, participatory, interactive and evocative. The facilitators employ a sensitive, respectful and non-judgmental approach in enabling the Body Mapping artists to share their story, gain insight into their own lives and culture, and receive support throughout the process.

In Body Mapping, a question is asked to each participant, who then responds in the form of a drawing or painting on a sheet of paper. No words are used. After a specified time allotted for individual work, the content of the drawing is shared verbally with the group—what it means, why the particular colours were used, when or where it happened and so on. At a later stage, the same drawings are placed within the life-size painting that forms the basis of the Body Map.

Body Maps are very evocative and powerful tools. Through them, participants are led to express and



share deeply personal experiences. Body Mapping also enables participants to (re)discover themselves as a source of strength and healing. The five-day workshop models the possibility of a safe, respectful, understanding and caring environment where coexistence rather than rejection or tension can prevail. This gives participants and communities an appreciation of the diversity of human beings, as well as the similarities between one group and another, thus facilitating greater understanding and nurturing dialogue between people and across different cultures and traditions.



Body Mapping in Garissa County

Garissa County is situated in north-eastern Kenya on the Kenyan–Somali border. It is predominantly home to many ethnic Somalis and other groups of people from across Kenya, including around half a million refugees from neighbouring countries, making it ethnically diverse. The county has been affected by protracted conflicts and entrenched insecurity since Kenyan independence in 1963. These experiences have contributed to deepening a sense of marginalisation, grievance and alienation within the communities that live there. The introduction of devolution in 2013 offers an opportunity all for Kenyans to contribute to greater social cohesion and a sense of an inclusive identity that reflects the diversity of all citizens. This has the potential to begin shifting the narrative of Garissa County towards increased security, continued development and sustainable peace.

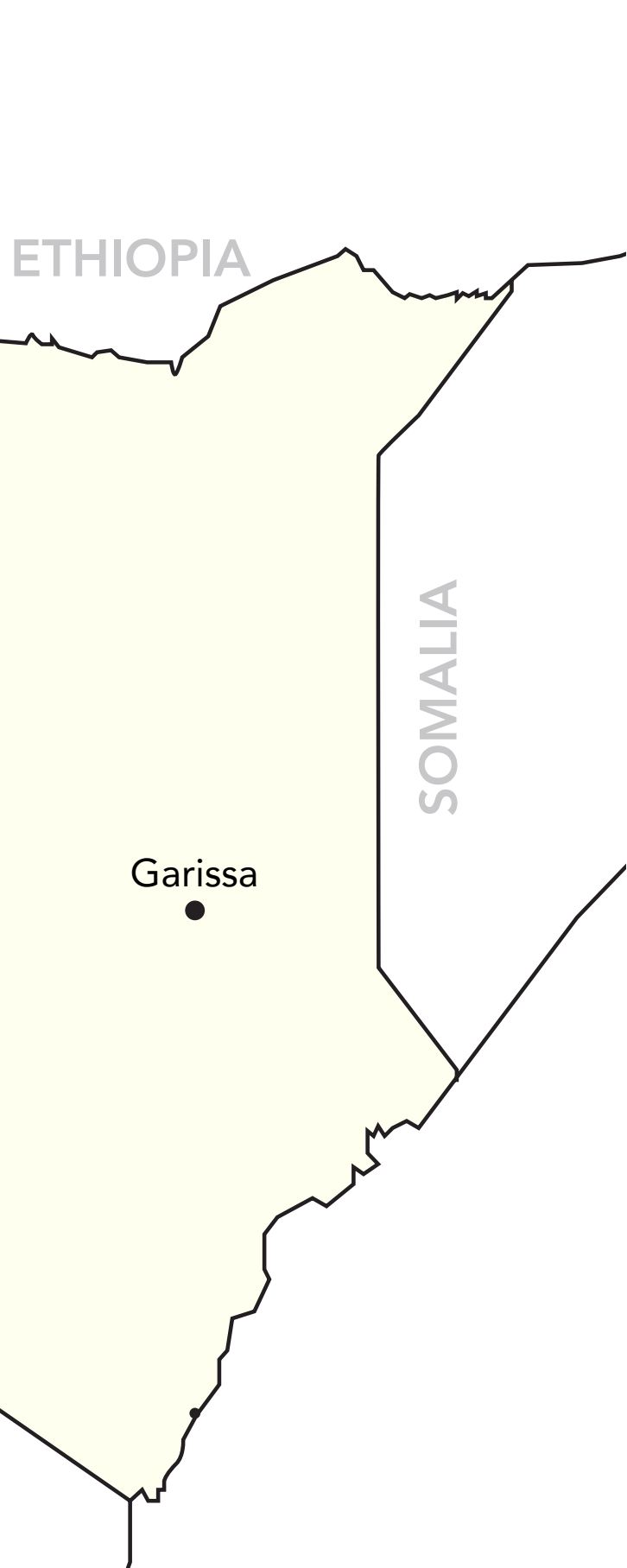
Since 2016, following traumatic events and at times of heightened insecurity, LPI and SUPKEM have worked in close collaboration with Art2B, a Nairobi-based organisation comprised of artists, psychologists, social workers and community activists, to carry out four Body Mapping workshops. These workshops have resulted in public exhibitions and opportunities for visitors and residents to reflect on peace in Garissa Country.

Workshop participants reflected on their life experiences in relation to the following issues:

- Origin as a Kenyan, including reference to an important feature of their culture
- A memory from childhood or childhood environment
- Personal goals and aspirations
- Most difficult or challenging moments
- Happiest or most significant moments
- Five important moments in Kenyan history
- Vision for the future of Kenya, in particular what they want to achieve as an agent of peace

These themes are explored by the Body Maps and personal stories presented in this book.





PART 1: DIVERSE IDENTITIES

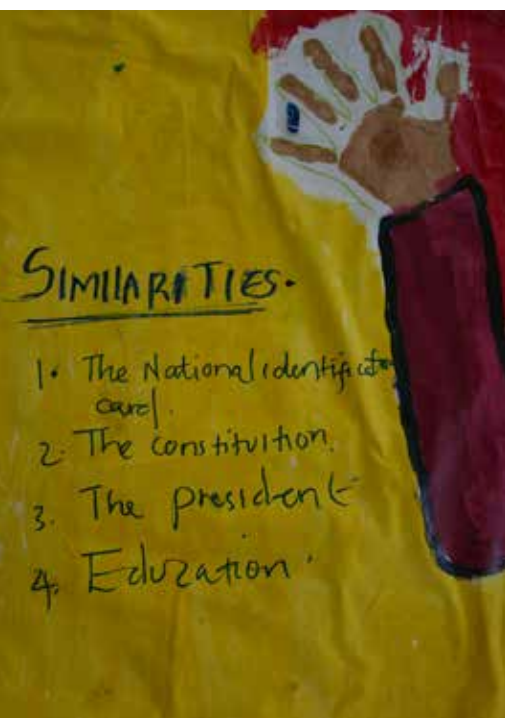
The three self-reflections and Body Maps presented here illustrate the starkly different experiences of life in Garissa County, depending on who you are and from whence you come. They offer a view of the lived realities of identity and inclusion in this conflict-prone part of Kenya.

The first Body Map is created by *Muna Salat*, a young Kenyan woman of Somali origin. An aspiring medical doctor, Muna talks about her experiences of studying in Thika, a majority Kikuyu town, and how she was initially viewed by her fellow students. During the course of sharing reflections of her story, she points to an important realisation: that her new friends had never had the opportunity to meet a Somali-Kenyan before. Muna also talks about how exclusion and inclusion based on clan and ethnic identity affect all Kenyans and expresses her desire to educate her own community about the rights of girls and women.

The next Body Map belongs to *Arafaa*, who works at Garissa University College as a counsellor. She is proud to be a Kenyan and to raise her seven children as Kenyan citizens. In Kenya, she says, she wants for nothing. A thirty-nine-year-old single mother, Arafaa owns her own home and has established several

businesses, in addition to her work at the university. She speaks personally about the al-Shabaab attack on the university on 2 April 2015, the scale of the trauma it caused across campus for students and teachers alike, and how she was largely left alone to offer counselling. Arafaa also talks about life in Kenya before and after the large influx of refugees in 1991, as well as more recent influxes. Although clearly troubled by these different events, she nonetheless is content with her life.

Abdinassir Abdullahi narrates the third self-reflection presented here. He offers a relatively comprehensive overview of the multiple sources of conflict in Garissa County, including reference to inter-clan conflict, generational disputes, a rural–urban divide, water shortages and land rights. A devout Muslim, Abdinassir also talks about the constraints that religious belief poses for further development in his community. He highlights the diversity of Kenya, with its various ethnic communities, clans, languages and cultures. He also speaks of his experiences of discrimination and his disappointment that youth are not benefitting as much as they thought they would from devolution. Abdinassir dreams of being a prominent activist who speaks out and works to change the problems facing Kenya.



My name is **Muna Salat** and I come from a village known as Bulla Iskadeq in a remote place of Garissa County. The village is not like a town. It is a rural area where most people reared animals until devolution came. I was born in 1993. I can remember how education was a challenge for girls in the village. Now it is better because mentalities have changed. More girls are encouraged to go to school but before there was nothing called girl-child education.

The work of a girl was only to stay at home to fetch water and assist their mums. Today, I can see the difference between life in the village and life in an urban area. At that time in the village, there was only a big hut, a beautiful one made from grass. That was a nice place. Nowadays, there is nothing that is called a hut or a *manyatta*². Today, I live in a self-contained place in Garissa town and I feel good. I am enjoying it because there is a lot of development, a lot of devolution and a lot of new inventions. When I was a child, there was nothing called TV. The only means of communication was radio but now everyone has a television in their home.

Currently, I can describe Kenya as a developed country. We hope it will go further. My own development is to see myself becoming a full doctor, after studying as a nutritionist, where I can assist my community with my knowledge. And soon, I will also assist my community to promote girl-child education since there is not enough education for the girls in the county. I want to create awareness about female genital mutilation, or FGM. I will educate my society about the effects of FGM, which is part of Somali culture and which is our main problem with girl-child education.

Because I am a Kenyan of Somali origin, I have my religion and my way of dressing. I wear a big veil. I love my colour. My complication is when a person sees me and immediately identifies me because of what I am wearing, the way I behave and my language. But we need to respect each other. They go to church and I go to the mosque. We are different in appearance. So what?

2 A *manyatta* is a structure made of sticks, mud and ash. Simple low environmental impact housing for both people and animals, a *manyatta* can be built in a day, using a *panga* (long knife with a broad blade).

I have travelled in Kenya. Thika is the place I went to study. I remember everything was new to me. I was fearful because I did not know the place and I did not know the people, who I had never come across before. They are mainly Kikuyus. But after a bit of time, I adapted to their culture, to their behaviour. After a month of living in Thika, I was feeling okay. You can cope with the majority of people. You speak the same language—English or Kiswahili—and you understand each other. They [Kikuyus] are more sociable and friendly [than we are]. You can easily socialise with them and be their friends.

At the beginning, they questioned me. One funny guy used to call me “al-Shabaab”. I was a little upset about that. But it was just a joke and I didn’t get offended. At first, I felt very bad but then I realised that they had never been to Garissa or met a Somali or a Muslim woman. So they didn’t know the real thing. When they see you for the first time, they can have negative thoughts or concerns. But after a while, this stops.

This thing [the fight against al-Shabaab] has become a social and political tool, with different ideologies that are not based on religion. They want to gain leadership or they are fighting against leadership.

My Body Map

I am proud to be a Kenyan citizen. It is the place where I have grown up and been educated, up to the highest level. When there was a terror attack, the government tried and worked hard to maintain peace and unity. And to maintain tight security in order to survive and protect the people. But they also used discrimination. This is not, however, as major a problem as clannism is.

I hope when people see this picture, we can develop positive attitudes to avoid discrimination and clannism because in Kenya we are clan-minded. If you go to apply for a job, you will be called for an interview but in the end, they will take the closest person—the one they know best—or the one who has paid money [as a bribe]. Nobody will look at your qualifications. This is tribalism, clannism. It is about connections. This is even more so the case in our own [Somali Kenyan] community. Here, at this workshop, I was empowered by this art.

I never took an art class before. Now I feel happy and am enjoying myself. I have gained experience and knowledge about my society—the way things are, the way there is a lot of tribalism and corruption. I also learnt more about my colleagues when they were sharing their ideas and experiences.

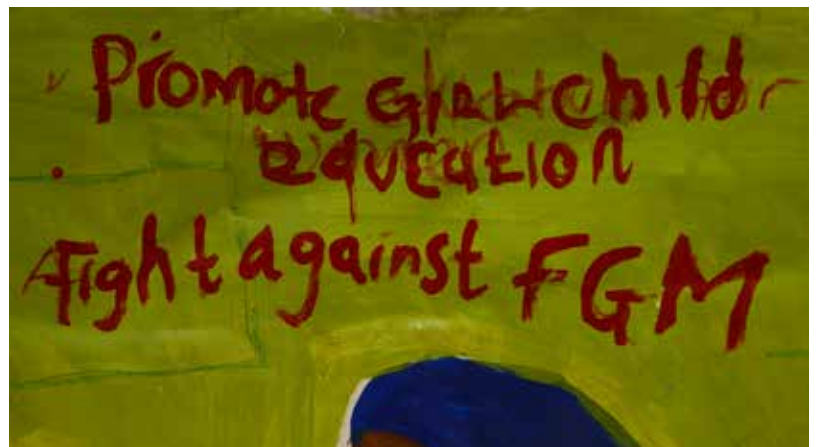
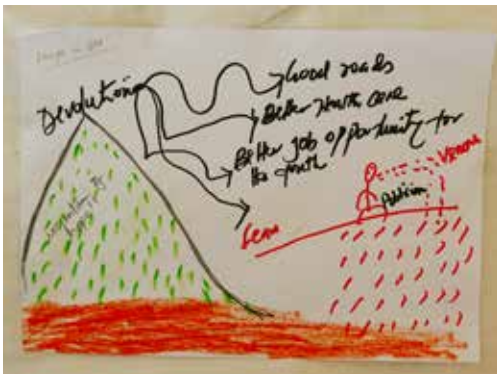
My Body Map includes both the environment and the inner self that is me. For my inner self, I have drawn in my mind that intra-clan disputes really affect my sense of purpose and my thinking. I remember this each and every time I see people fighting. It affects me.

The best moment in my life is when I assisted children in the paediatric ward, offering advice to help improve their nutrition levels.

I am proud of my cultural heritage, which is symbolised in the form of a camel and the traditional cup used for drinking milk, as well as the *ruma*, which is the traditional basket we use for storage.

With my Body Map, I have reminisced on the traditional housing and rearing of animals, with pictures of camels, goats and sheep coming to mind. I have also added a tree and a mosque, where we do our obligatory prayers. These images all reflect where I come from. The colour black on my Body Map shows that there is unity, that there is a government in our land [Garissa County]. Black also shows the effects of devolution, with the tarmac roads, because they didn't exist before. People should promote peace and unity. Clannism should be avoided. It is not good for our society.





My name is **Arafaa**. I'm thirty-nine years old and a divorced mother of seven children.

I was born in Wajir and grew up there until I was five years old when we moved to Garissa. It is here that I went to school, both primary and secondary. I live in Bulla Rahma on the outskirts of Garissa, in my own house. In college, I graduated as a counsellor and I work in this same capacity at Garissa University.

I am Kenyan by birth. We used to say that Kenya is a peaceful country. During the previous regime, under the Moi presidency, things in Garissa were cheap. We were mostly pastoralists. There was enough rainfall. When I was young, Garissa was a very good place for all the people who came here from all over. I like this county and hope to die here. It is a nice place. I'm proud to be Kenyan because I was born here. I got my identity here. I grew up and raised my kids here. Since my birth, I haven't seen any problems in Kenya. In government offices, you are well treated. The leaders of the country are not that corrupt. If fighting breaks out, people do it once and then calm prevails. It is my country and I want for nothing.

At the university, I do individual counselling, group counselling, marital counselling, trauma counselling and sensitisation work related to HIV/AIDS. I also do drug addiction and substance use counselling, both for the students and staff. It is a huge task for one person to counsel the whole community. But sometimes I'm assisted by others who have a background in counselling.

What we went through at Garissa University in 2015 is a disaster that we will always remember. I was off campus when it happened but when I came to the university, I found my students and some of my best friends dead. The day before, I had travelled to Moi University in Eldoret with some students. We were to travel back to Garissa the following morning but one of the students insisted that we travel back on the same night. We arrived quite late. He is one of those who was killed the next morning during the attack. I always think about how things would have been different if we had not travelled back. He might still be alive.

Following the attack, I was the only counsellor available. I managed to counsel many survivors [students and staff alike]. But we could only do one healing session per person. Although I myself was in need of counselling, there was no one to provide it for me. We received hardly any assistance from the government. We are still waiting for help, several years later. Many of the students and staff still live with the fear of another attack. But we hope an attack will not happen again.

My Body Map

See the way I'm lying down? That means I'm relaxed. Currently, that is what I'm experiencing. I have survived many difficulties. I remember during my divorce, alone and without anyone to help me. I was a bit depressed. But later on, things worked out. I was able to work through my issues. I took everything positively. I started with a plan and then bought a house, a vehicle and set up some businesses. All this is shown in my painting by the image of myself sitting comfortably on a big stool. My children are happy and I'm in a very good environment.

The area that I painted in green, with the tall houses, is the kind of life Kenya had before. Today's Kenya comes in different colours, meaning we are not as we were before. We have different faces of Kenya, as a result.

Inside my Body Map, I have drawn the important moments of my life. The most important is the day I was born. It is because my parents were happy, saying that I was going to be the best of their children. Then, I remember the day I went to school for the first time. I was happy to interact with so many other pupils. Also, the day I completed my secondary school is very important. That meant a bright future to come. As an adult, I could reason; see and tell wrong from right. Next is when I got married. A transition from childhood to adulthood. It is a responsibility of sharing your life with a partner and having everything in common. After that, is the day I had my first born. I was very happy to become a mother, having my blood next to me, someone who can help when you are sick.

To crown it all off, I had a baby girl! She is now the one helping me in all that I must face. I'm happy about everything I am today.

My name is **Abdinassir Abdullahi**. I was born in 1995 in a place called Bulla Rik, in Garissa County. For eight years, I went to a boarding school in Sankuri, about 30 kilometres away from Garissa. Life was not very friendly there. But I adapted because I knew that later on, I would be using what I had learnt to be the best in our society. Over time, and with a lot of effort, I have reached a stage where I can start my degree at Garissa University College. I want to specialise in finance or accounting.

The major challenge for our society in Garissa is the issue of conflict among ourselves. The fights that we have every now and then are petty. I don't see them as a big issue. But nonetheless they should be solved. Our communities can fight over a water pan [a small reservoir of excavated ground used to collect and store water]. One family says this pan is theirs. Another family comes with a herd and they say they want to use it. Then, the tensions rise until violence breaks out between those families. Water is so important.

Besides water, another cause of tension is the land issue. Sharing it. Some claim land belongs to them since their fathers used to live on it. But then another person comes along and tells you that he [or she] bought it from another person. A quarrel ensues and then it escalates. Some will die and others will be injured. If you do not solve it at that level [locally], it will spread and become a big problem. But the killings in the community do not really affect people who live in town. Two tribes can be fighting in the bush but two young men from those different tribes can sleep under the same roof when they are town. Still, Garissa is a big place. There's discrimination between people and clans. You might hear one clan saying that this town belongs to us, which is very wrong.

Youth is the powerhouse of society. But they have always been misused by the politicians as a weapon of violence. Youths who were close friends are now separated and harbour hatred towards each other. From my perspective as a peace-loving young man, I organise our youth to be aware of essential aspects of peace. I encourage them to think and to explore other avenues of self-development. I discourage tribalism and clannism, along with any other kind of negative mindset.

The governor [of Garissa County] is from my tribe, the Abudwak clan. Once he took power, we [the clan youths] thought he would employ us. We thought that we are going to be rich and driving our own cars. Have our own houses and wives. We had that picture in our minds. But I'm still where I was. I feel bitter, and it is a good lesson for me. God willing, for the 2022 general election, we are going to select one candidate from the youth.

Religion plays a big role in my life. At the same time, I feel that our mentality stops us from thinking in different ways. Tradition is still strong. We say that there is no need for educating a girl-child because she may later bring shame to society. It's like we don't understand that the rights they have are the same as a boy-child has. These beliefs are making us lag behind. In our region, we don't even elect ladies. We are conservative. Most of our elders don't want to go to big towns or to negotiate with other Kenyans. They just want to stay in the bush.

Kenya is big and there is so much diversity. My look, my features, the texture of my hair. I can't compare myself to a Kikuyu man or a Kalenjin or a Luo. We have different mother tongues. Geographically, our lands are also very different. But I find myself discriminated against when it comes to resources. Look at Nairobi—big roads, booming businesses, industries, a lot of police posts, tight security. And high-quality education. If you meet guys from Kisumu [a port city on Lake Victoria] or other places, those people have hopes of getting employment because there are industries or factories where they come from. They normally do courses relevant to such industries. But in the northern region, it is difficult to have a career because there's nowhere to start.

I'm planning to be a prominent political activist. That is my biggest goal. I have to speak out about our society's evils. The kind of problems that happened in 2007 are still happening³. The Kenyan electoral body is not transparent. The effective exercise of political power is compromised by individuals. This is especially the case among those who have been in power since

³ The narrator refers to election-related violence that accompanied the 2007 elections, in response to the disputed results. Approximately 1,500 people were killed and 600,000 people displaced between December 2007 and February 2008

independence. Whoever speaks the truth about the politics of this country is either assassinated or deported. It is wrong to see my people suffering while others sleep well.

My Body Map

My slogan is “No peace, no development”. On top of my head, the colour blue shows openness. Black is about Africa. There is a house here but I don’t like to go there. Since this community isn’t that welcoming, the colour red indicates that they are always at war. The place isn’t safe. Fortunately, there is a place where I do like to go. The house is painted green to attract visitors. And all the land surrounding it is also green. People there are welcoming and hospitable.

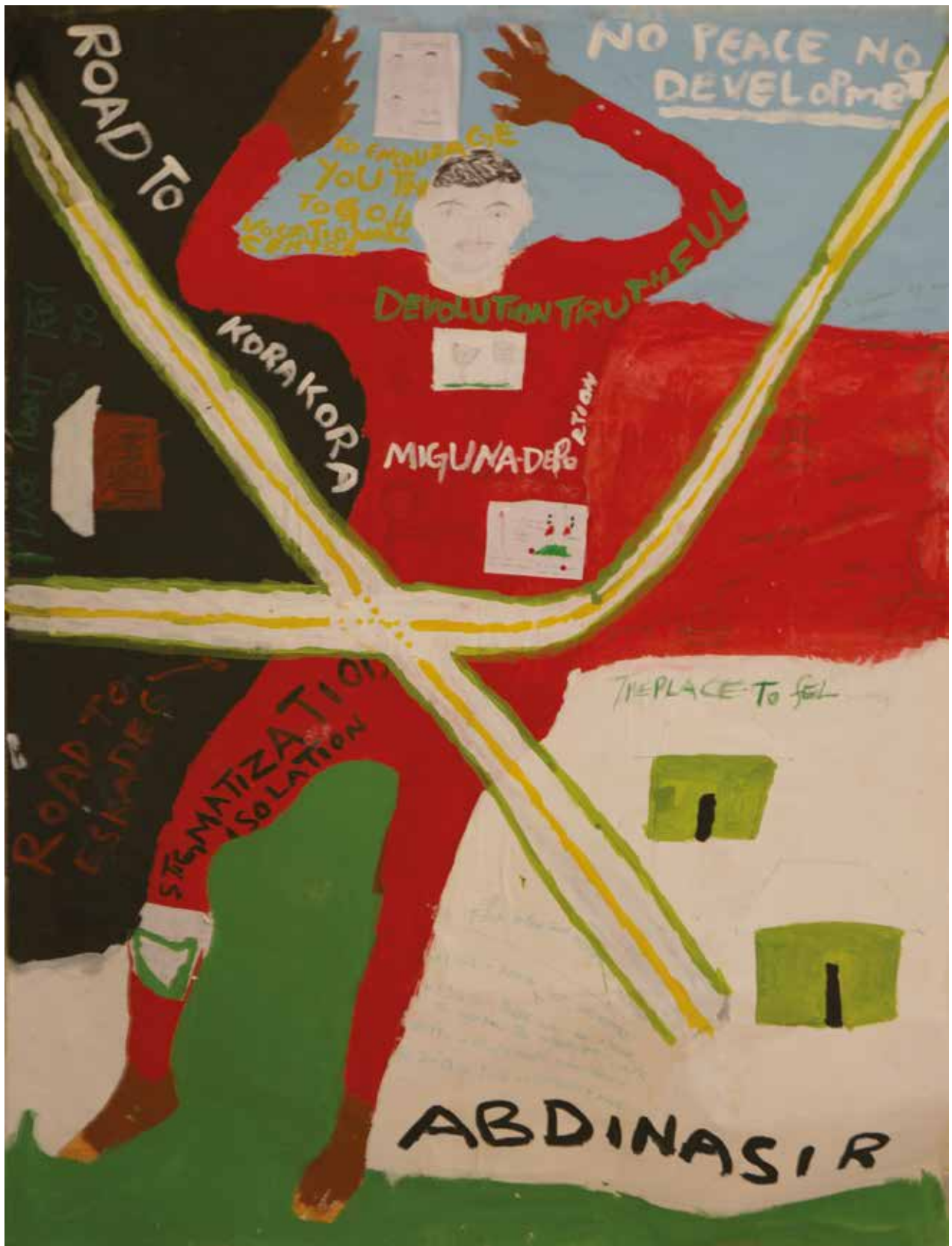
I have used white to show a peace-loving community. They solve problems in their own way [using *xeer*, which is customary law]. They do not involve the police in their matters but instead look to their elders. I’m from the Kora community and wish to convey our hospitality to our neighbours, the Kodek. Between the two communities, there is a road. It symbolises the divisions between the two clans that live there.

We did not reject them or prevent them from living among us. Instead, they have perceptions of not being safe among us. We do many things together but there is deep-seated mistrust. Issues that still need to be dealt with. Their youth and ours are friendly. They are educated and understand the effects of war. But their elders still have those perceptions [of not being safe among us].

Inside my body, on one side, I feel part of Kenya. I drew my identity card. But I was not always proud to be Kenyan because resources were not shared equally. Today, devolution has made me feel better. I am now recognised as a Kenyan. Before 2010, we felt left out. Devolution is the moment I feel that I am part of Kenya. I painted the lower part of my Body Map in green. My reason is that when we experience rain, the colour of the land changes. Animals will have pasture and people will have plenty of food. We call these blessings.

This Body Mapping workshop has really motivated me.

I’m very happy. It has made me become more practical and helped me to reflect on my goals, on Kenya, on peacebuilding... I am going to use everything that I have learnt to give back to my society. Body Mapping transformed my life. Although my ideas were there before, it was like they were only theoretical to me. But now, since I have become more practical, I get the real picture.







PART 2: RESILIENCE AMIDST VIOLENCE

The two Body Maps in this section of the book illustrate key themes that range from experiences of violence and the shortcomings of politics to the necessity of dialogue and understanding for resolving the challenges facing Kenyan society—and the sheer will power and determination it takes to build peace.

The first self-reflection is told by *Farouk*, who is a twenty-three-year-old Somali-Kenyan originally from the village of Dujis and now living in Garissa town. He speaks about his experiences of clan-related violence in his home village, which was burnt to the ground, as well as the tribalism at work when it comes to employment. Commenting that some people in Kenya are more Kenyan than others, Farouk also discusses his encounters with discrimination because of his Somali origins. Despite these experiences, Farouk remains resolutely committed to peace, nonviolence and dialogue as the only way for Kenyans to address their problems.

Gilbert Ruto created the second Body Map and self-reflection. Coming from a very humble and traditional background in the Kalenjin land, he is now a teacher of information technology at Garissa University College. After the al-Shabaab attack at the university in April

2015, he dedicated himself to be an ambassador for peace. In the immediate aftermath of the violence, Gilbert bravely returned to the university to help remove the bodies of those who were killed. Although Garissa is a place of violence and conflict, he celebrates the multiculturalism of his adopted city, which inspires him on a daily basis. Gilbert's Body Map is both a legacy and a testimony to the future—a legacy of his contributions to making Kenya a better place and a testimony to the enduring importance of peace.



My name is **Farouk**. I am Kenyan of Somali origin. I was born in Garissa County and I'm twenty-three years old. My village of birth, where I was brought up, is near the Somali border. It is called Dujis. I come from a humble background. My parents are pastoralists and we used to live a nomadic lifestyle. When I was six years old, I moved and was brought up in Garissa town, where I finished my primary and secondary education. Then I attended Eldoret University to pursue my diploma in project management. Because of some problems, I did not continue further, so stopped there.

My experience in Eldoret was very challenging. The people who live there are not like my community. They weren't open to strangers. The worst came when the al-Shabaab attacks took place at Garissa University in 2015, and before that in Nairobi at Westgate Shopping Mall in 2013. Even in Eldoret, everyone pointed at me and called me al-Shabaab because I am of Somali origin. After the Westgate attack, I was going into a building with my friends, and the watchman—who I knew—frisked my bag and pockets but did not do the same to my colleagues. I felt very bad to be singled out as a potential terrorist. I lost a cousin in a terror attack, yet I'm suspected of being a terrorist myself.

Dujis is a village in a semi-arid area. Our main sources of water are rain harvesting, dams and boreholes, some of which dry up when it is very hot. Just like other villages, people have small businesses such as hotels, shops or livestock trading. Dujis has schools, a health centre and a police post. Life in Dujis is like any other village.

There was, however, an incident that differentiates Dujis from other villages.

In December 2015, we had major clashes between clans and some people were killed at night. These clashes were followed by retaliation. The village was set alight and burnt to the ground. Several months later, another attack happened, which was even worse. The police tried to intervene but they were outnumbered.

I was around when it all happened. Those days, I had a car for business purposes. As I was returning home at around 9.30 p.m., I could hear gun shots. Upon arriving, I saw police officers trying to scare people

away because villagers were fighting with stones and machetes. It was really fierce. I drove away and decided to hide. I stayed hidden in a place for a good three days—until police reinforcements had arrived and the fires that were set had subsided.

Back in the village, there was a heavy police presence, with heavy artillery patrolling the roads. All the buildings in Dujis had burnt down. Later on, my transport business collapsed because so many people had run away.

The fighting was between two sub-clans of the Ogaden clan. It was all for land ownership and water resources. We had similar tensions in 1997. It stopped for a while and then started again, after the presidential elections of 2013.

Now I live in Garissa town. It is the best place to live. It is an arid land but it has everything. Over time, it has gotten some of the best businesses. We have farms. Garissa can be described as an educational centre. There are so many schools today. Before, people used to say that Garissa people did not go to school but today we have an improved infrastructure.

Some of the new infrastructure projects here have been initiated by the central government and not the county government. If used correctly, devolution is good and can help Garissa and all Kenyans. Most of the stakeholders in the county government are corrupt. Resources are used for the wrong purpose and get into the wrong people's hands. They are not as transparent as they should be. Neighbouring Wajir County does not have such cases. In fact, Wajir is the best county in terms of development—going by the statistics. It is a question of leadership. Their governor is someone who is accountable and he knows what he is doing.

Kenya is the only place I know since birth. Kenyans are peace-loving people. And compared to our neighbours, Kenya is the most developed. We are welcoming and like to engage with new ideas. This spirit contributes to our development. But in Garissa County, every government office you visit is the face of corruption. It is never ending. It makes me feel very sad and powerless.

Another thing is tribalism, especially in employment

matters. This vice will destroy us. We all claim to be Kenyan but even when registering for an identity card, there's some bias. I tried to get an identity card for three years. Every time I applied, my application got rejected for some flimsy excuse—even when it had no mistakes. After applying the last time, I waited for about four months before I got my ID card. I'm not sure if the same applies to other communities. From that angle, you see there are some who are more Kenyan than others.

My Body Map

My message to the world is this: without peace, we better forget everything else. I'm really encouraging people to say no to violence. I also say that bad politics leads to a bad life.

The colours I have used on my painting are blue, white and green. Blue represents the sky and hope. White shows Kenyans as peace loving, with a few hiccups in our history. And I used green because of our environment.

On my Body Map, I have painted two people hugging. They represent the hospitality of the Somali people. Next are the crafts that I have learnt from my grandparents. These items are part of my culture. I have also shown the Somali way of life—my origins, the manyatta house and the river. The moment I feel proud as a Kenyan is when our athletes win medals and the Kenyan flag is being raised as the national anthem is played. So I drew this, too. Then, I drew these women, who are sitting there, in the schools and next to the houses. They are perpetrators of female genital mutilation. This is one of the things I dislike about my culture. It is a foreign practice that we adopted. It is primitive.

I want Kenya to be better. Our infrastructures have improved and the education system has been upgraded. As Kenyans, we all go through the same education system. We use the same currency and have the same rights in the constitution. Our differences are just cultural practices and economic activities.

At first, I was curious about this workshop. It reminded me of my past, and it was really fun and interesting.

These were very busy days that helped me to learn a lot about myself and others. If my story is shared, my story and my artwork can help people to become aware of peace, equality and my life as a Kenyan. I can tell Kenyans to remain peaceful and be respectful of other people. Sometimes, we lack these qualities and start labelling others.

We must make people talk together and understand each other. Only dialogue can help us to sort out our problems.



I am **Gilbert Ruto**. I was born in Eldoret, in the Rift Valley. I grew up with a very humble and traditional background, in the Kalenjin land. In my home, immediately after school, you would rush to go and fetch some water. My mother would go for firewood, while my brother was busy looking after the animals. In the forest, it was an adventure as a kid. After that we moved to a bigger house, where my parents still live. It is well fenced and there is vegetation. Unfortunately, I only spend time there during Christmas.

My vision of Kenya is not that great. As it is, we are still busy producing graduates with good marks. Unfortunately, however, the politicians are busy looting [the country's resources]. So, at the end of the day, you will find people with education certificates but no jobs. If you approach a politician, he [or she] will check first which party you voted for. This is how graduates become beggars. The solution for this in the future is to pay politicians like any other professionals. That is when people will start perfecting their professions and Kenya will be a better country.

As I was growing up, I had to complete my studies in different schools and got to interact with different people. I'm in Garissa now, which is almost 1,000 kilometres away from my home village, working in a multicultural society. I feel good about interacting with such different people. I am learning a lot and get a lot of inspiration, day in, day out. When I got this job here, as an information technology teacher, I was happy because I knew it was my only chance. As you can see in this world, only men who take risks end up being successful.

The big challenge was my parents, who weren't enthusiastic about me being in Garissa because of the conflicts and the violence. But Garissa is inside Kenya, and I am a proud Kenyan anywhere. So I came here. That was among the toughest choices I had to make. I am ready to serve my country wherever I am, even if it means dying. I want to leave a legacy.

My first vivid impression when I arrived in Garissa was the temperature. It was so hot! In my entire life, I had never been to a place where there was no vegetation. When I saw Garissa, sand all over the place, I wondered

if this was Kenya. With time, I have adapted to the place. I saw these were my brothers and sisters. The bottom line is that this is Kenya and they are Kenyans. In general, the world also has different climatic conditions. That's nature. I had to learn and adapt to nature, too.

Because of the horror that happened here at Garissa University in 2015, I decided to be a peace ambassador. I have remained one, too. Where there is peace, there's always development. It's healthy. Without development, one cannot overcome a trauma such as the one I experienced here. After what happened, about two weeks later I went to stay with my parents for a little while. I had three months of nightmares. I still haven't regained my sense of inner peace because I can wake up in the middle of the night, with my heart pounding, wondering if terrorists are here again.

I decided to come back to Garissa. We could enrol for counselling at the university but unfortunately the government left us to our own devices. So when you look at the students who experienced this traumatic event, you just want to give them a chance. I tried to assist them, to ensure that they could recuperate. I refused to leave Garissa⁴.

The first and second week after the attack, I took the risk of going to the university to help collect student belongings. I was also among those who were removing the bodies. This service gave me courage to continue. Since God had given me a second chance by not being one of the victims, I gave of myself to help humanity.

My Body Map

Looking at my Body Map, I decided to use the colour purple for the inside of my body. For me, purple stands for hope and I have always been hopeful in life. Look at my legs, my face. I used the normal colour of my skin. This is me and I'm proud of myself. My posture looks like I was doing some sit ups. In reality, it is like I'm perfecting something. Keep on trying and doing, with the hope to achieve something important.

⁴ After the al-Shabaab attack, some students and staff, including the narrator, were given the opportunity to relocate to Moi University in Eldoret. Instead, the narrator chose to remain in his IT teaching job at Garissa University College

I chose the colour white for the background of my Body Map because being in Garissa, I want coexistence. I had never experienced violent conflict or war, nor had I ever heard gun shots in my life—until 2007, during the post-election violence. I was eighteen years old and up until that time, it had been eighteen years of peace for me.

I'm grateful for the Body Mapping workshop because it has been a way for me to be healed. I have shared. In the past, I had some bitterness because of what I went through. My efforts to overcome those challenges and go on with my life didn't stop the bad memories from haunting me. At least I have spoken out and released part of the trauma.

Now I am on a totally new route. I'm chasing the dream of my life and am in a second phase. Before, when I was walking with one of my students, I didn't share that much, especially things that might bother him [or her]. Now, if a visitor came to the university and asked me what I did here that left an impact, I would tell him to come with me and I would show him my Body Map, which is hanging up on campus. My Body Map can stay here and live on, at least until I have a child.

I would love to share my Body Map with my child. I see it as a testimony to the future.



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PART 3: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The three self-reflections presented in this section are by far the most optimistic in the collection. They signify hope and deep commitment to change, while emphasising a strong sense of personal responsibility to take action to help shape the future of Kenya.

Fatuma, the first narrator, expresses a clear sense of her identity as a mother, as a Borana who is Muslim and, perhaps most important to her, as a brightly shining beacon of change who longs to improve the well-being of women and girls, her own community and Kenyans as a whole. A strong woman herself, she knows that women are the backbone of Kenyan society, which is reflected in the two local organisations she founded. Concerned about negative perceptions of her community, Fatuma firmly believes in the power of dialogue to overcome fear of others and create mutual understanding based on the commonalities Kenyans share. She feels inspired by what her Body Map reveals about who she is and marvels at all that she has and will accomplish.

The second Body Map comes from *Noordin Badel*, a dedicated peace activist who utilises his extensive network, developed through 20 years of playing football, to mobilise and engage people to work together to create change. After the al-Shabaab attack on Garissa University College in April 2015 and the

harsh government response that followed, Noordin organised the Walk of Hope. Starting with 250 people in Garissa, this long march arrived in Mandera with around 10,000 people, an impressive testimony to shared aspirations for unity and peace. Seeing major challenges—racism, discrimination, nepotism, unemployment and corruption—does not dampen his commitment to work for change. In fact, Noordin remains so optimistic that he wants to plant a million trees.

Meymuna is the final interlocutor in this series of self-reflections. She articulates her vision for the future of Kenya with passion and confidence in the potential for change. There will be peace, not violence. There will be unity, not discord. There will be development, including enough food, health services, infrastructure improvements and environmental protection, to meet the needs of all Kenyans. Crucially, Meymuna also spells out her own role and responsibility as an agent of hope, peace and change, saying that she values honesty, forgiveness and reconciliation. In her view, Kenyans must fight discrimination, work toward greater understanding of each other and find inspiration every day to make themselves better than the already are. For Meymuna, the future of Kenya is bright.



My name is **Fatuma** and I am from Modogashe, Isiolo County. I am a mother and I am a Borana by clan. We are mostly Muslims. Boranas are very patient people and always trustworthy. We never break promises. We believe that if you break trust, your children will not grow well. I love my culture but at the same time this culture represses women, belittles them. They are molested and never educated. According to Borana men, women should sit at home, eat and give birth.

Despite this, we know that the backbone of Kenya is really women. She gives birth to a boy, who will be the president. Also, the same woman can be president but our people are not very keen on girl-child education. That is a big challenge.

I see myself as an agent for change, breaking some of the habits that cause problems and harm Kenyans because we have our traditional customs that may contradict the laws of Kenya. I fight for the well-being of my community and for all Kenyans. I advocate for human rights, education for girls, the fight against women's circumcision [female genital mutilation]. And I am strong against corruption. When you see something that isn't going right, you stop it by your hand or by giving advice, or at least you advocate [for change]. It is my responsibility to say that things are wrong.

I'm doing more than what men expect of me. As a mother, too, whether invited or not, I will never give up on any issues that concern my community or give them an opportunity to decide for me or other vulnerable people who cannot express themselves. So, I always pop into some of the *barazas*, especially the ones where they make decisions⁵.

For financial reasons, my mother was unable to send me to secondary school. After a long struggle I was able to go to Garbatulla, where I found an organisation who sponsored me. I finished secondary school [equivalent to high school] but from there I was unable to proceed. I was then married because I had no other option than to

be at home. I married very early. I have four children—two boys and two girls.

Several years ago, I formed two organisations, focusing at first on youth and drug abuse. Then, later, I formed another forum—for women—focused on girl-child rights and early marriages, female genital mutilation and defilement cases. You know, if a woman is raped, our community tends to hide the issue because it is very shameful. That woman might not be able to get a husband to marry her. Or her husband will divorce her. So those are the things we are trying to abolish. I am pushing for a forum of women on the frontline to talk and express themselves.

As Kenyans, we have hospitals but there's no medication, no drugs. We don't have water at all, and the poverty level is very high. We are pastoralists who depend on animals. Sometimes, though, our animals are stolen by bandits. Then we remain poor. But this is not only the government's responsibility.

You see, in whatever someone does, resources should come first. You can't just make peace around your home and with your neighbours. You need resources to bring peace on a wider basis. This community is very illiterate. They are not educated. Mentalities are very hard to change. In our area, there's no war as such. But there are many conflicts over specific resources.

Most Kenyans are educated. Education is free up to secondary school, right now. And at least there are job opportunities. We were very happy when the new constitution was passed. The devolved system of government and the new constitution have helped us a lot. Power has moved from central government to the county level. And now, at the county level, it is just your children or your people who are your leaders. They speak your language. Nowadays, we don't struggle to go to Nairobi to look for money for water or medication for hospitals. We go to the county level. I think soon we shall catch up with the rest of Kenya. I like it. We, too, can enjoy the national cake. And we are very comfortable with other Kenyans.

But what I find challenging is the type of perceptions others have of us. We are termed "soft head people"

⁵ *Barazas* are community gatherings where issues affecting the community are discussed and decisions taken on how best they should be resolved. In Kenya, they often are called by the chief, who is the local government administrator, and at other times by elders. The word "*baraza*" is Kiswahili and literally means a public meeting place

[an insult referring to mental deficiency]. People say that every Cushite is a terrorist⁶. And if I may take you back some years... A place like Sirichua Division or Isiolo South or Isiolo at large. We saw the government under former President Kibaki impose a state of emergency that was very repressive for the people in those places. Their animals were taken. Men were killed. Women were widowed and children orphaned. Money was promised to assist the victims but it never reached them. You see, in Kenya, corruption is very high.

My Body Map

On my painting, I drew a sun and a moon. They are shining. I see myself as a shining or bright object that can help me, my community and Kenyans at large to change. I'm a sun, a moon. I am a torch.

Most of us have forgotten where we come from, where we are and what our goals are. You have come from almost nowhere. Now where am I? I have learnt that when things come into my mind, I'm moving through a process: the past, present and future.

The body here is very big in this picture. Can this body be able to change the situation? You can be a big body with an empty mind. But through this workshop, I have learnt I have a position in this community and I can work to change the things I don't agree with.

In my picture, you see that I'm well dressed, with some parts in yellow, some parts in green. This represents different types of behaviour or lifestyle. White clothes mean peace. Sometimes, in the past, I wore red clothes because of danger. So, how will I stop wearing red clothes in order to wear something yellow or white? In the end, what you are going to do—that's what matters. And once you achieve your goal, your children will be living on this earth very peacefully.

Right now, I have learnt that if we sit and discuss what

we have in common, we might overcome our fear of one another and nobody will take advantage of us. I always say I won't go to the neighbouring village because they used to fight. So, probably they would not listen to me. That is my perception. Maybe they will welcome me, as a person who is more than just my clan. Maybe they will only see me as being from a different clan. Some clans believe others to be their rivals—always. You see, they cannot differentiate me from a Somali but I'm very different. I'm Borana. Even my color. The way I look.

I never thought that my body carried all these responsibilities. After placing these images [symbols of culture, moments of pain, moments of pride] on my Body Map, I find my body can carry all these things. The good and the bad things.

⁶ Cushite, or Cushitic, people constitute one of the three major ethno-linguistic groups in Kenya. Residing in a large area of arid land that ranges from the east of Lake Turkana, covers the north of Kenya and extends to the Indian Ocean, Cushites are mainly nomadic pastoralists who keep large herds of cattle, camels, goats and sheep. They tend to maintain very close ties with their kin in the neighbouring countries of Somalia and Ethiopia. Cushites include the Somali, Rendile, Borana and Oromo tribes.



My name is **Noordin Badel**. I am a peace activist. I have enjoyed this training. I love adventure and see this as an adventure. The first day, I was a bit worried. It was something I had not tried before but I love trying new things. Sometimes art speaks louder than words. We can appreciate this now.

My Body Map

Let me go straight to my Body Mapping. There are two houses, one in my head and another one in my heart. There is a slight difference between these two houses. I have been personal in one and not so personal in the other. The house in my head has a ladder, which means it is still under construction. There is someone on top of the ladder, who is building the house. There are two people, each of whom are painted in different colours. One looks a bit dark and the other one looks brown. The brown coloured person represents my local youths, myself and my colleagues. The other person, who is darker, represents youth from other parts of Kenya.

My best moment in life is not yet here. But actually, on this drawing, it is me on top of the house, building it. Perhaps my son will help me build the house and do the plumbing. All the stuff we, as Somalis, feel we should not do [because such work is considered beneath us]. If you look at our poems, people doing masonry, plumbing and electricity are given bad names. You can't change people immediately when there is a strong culture but I believe that this part of Somali culture should change.

The challenge we have now is choosing what kind of work to do. We all want some sort of white collar job. We don't want to do any other types of jobs. But developing a town depends on those other jobs. If you go to that bridge at the entrance of Garissa town, every morning there are about 5,000 people coming into town. Everybody gets 1,000 Kenya shillings, or at least 500 per day. In the evening, though, they leave and that money does not circulate here in town. When I was young, after school, I just sat around like any other youth at home. Jobless. With all these other jobs around me that I did not want to do because I didn't want to be stigmatised for doing such jobs. These are some of my saddest memories. And I still think that we have this challenge—right up to the present time.

The Garissa University attack really shocked me. I was devastated. In my drawing, I have represented a police officer, sleeping on a bed. Whether you are part of the government or the security forces, if something happens, you run toward it and act. But this police officer is sleeping. And when he wakes up, there will be no time to investigate who did what, and why. There will be nothing for them to see. It will be too late, so they will go to sleep again. That is negligence. Nobody reacted fast enough or worked enough on the intelligence data to avoid the massacre at the university. The principal of the university actually wrote seven letters to the government about the risks but nobody acted. Knowing Garissa and the risk of attack, you wonder if the government even cares about this town.

The flame painted on my Body Map is a symbol of the effects of how they [government authorities and security forces] mismanaged what happened at the university.

I have been playing football since primary school. That's about 20 years and now I am a captain. I go around the country recruiting and training talented young players. I have connected with many people, so I have used this to become a community mobiliser, which I started doing right after the Garissa attack. I started to mobilise my community because we felt the effects of this attack on ourselves. We had a curfew imposed on us. The *hawala* [money transfer systems] businesses were closed. There were forceful disappearances, a surge of insecurity, the bank accounts of prominent people were frozen. Garissa became a dark and rude place at that particular time. It is then that I started to use my ability and my connections to mobilise my community with a programme called "Awakening of Hope".

We did the long Walk of Hope from Garissa to Mandera [about 1,000 kilometres]. At the beginning, 250 people took part in the walk. We were just looking for new hope but the government was so concerned about our march that they wondered if we were starting a new Arab revolution. So there were security agents who dressed like us and walked with us. For days, until we got to Mandera, we talked and engaged with many communities that were fighting each other. We reached Mandera with about 10,000 people.

Only three of us took part in the entire walk and we got to meet the president. This is one of my best moments—when I received recognition from the president and the United Nations because my mission was to unite and create cohesion among fighting communities. We are seeking togetherness. I want the young people of my clan to stop being idle and instead work to change things.

I have an identity crisis as a Somali Kenyan in this county. First, I want to use this art, my Body Map, to change our people's perceptions. Our issues are racism and discrimination because we do the same to other people as they do to us. Second, when it comes to nepotism and employment, we are exactly the same. You can understand the kind of chances a person of the Kikuyu, Luo or Kamba tribe has in Garissa and that is close to zero. So if I go to other places, I will also be discriminated against [because of nepotism and clannism]. We as Kenyans are all involved in it.

We have this in common: corruption, discrimination and unemployment. They are all linked. Think about al-Shabaab and their terrorism. We have heard people who have been caught say they are from western Kenya. We know some of them are from the Kamba tribe. In the attack on Garissa University, only one of the four was a Somali, a Luhya who had gone to Nairobi University and who had left northern Kenya when he was very young. We all need to work and acknowledge our responsibilities. Kenya is a peaceful country. Yes, I am critical but I am proud of it. I am hopeful and I would like to plant one million trees to express my optimism.



My name is **Meymuna**. In my Body Map, I used the colour green to portray my name. To me, it represents life—its beauty—and nature. The surrounding colour is also green and red. Red symbolises bloodshed, which means the destruction of life and the surrounding environment.

My place of origin is Garissa. In the drawing, I have drawn the main Kismayo road, the high school, Kalifah mosque and then a homestead. It used to look like this. I see myself in Garissa, coming to the university. I see Garissa developing. I see buildings, markets, a green environment, many *boda bodas* [motorcycle taxis]. That is how Garissa looks to me today. It feels good to see Garissa this way, with a lot of activities. The market tells us there is peace. And the green environment is an indication that there is rain, and the beauty of our environment.

My aspiration is to be an agent of hope, peace and positive change. I believe that there will be peace. No bloodshed. There will be hope, food, medical services, preservation of the environment and infrastructure developments.

My Body Map

I portray two things: Meymuna relaxing and Meymuna visualising the future. She is surrounded by the Kenyan flag that looks into the future. Meymuna is looking at the possibilities of Kenyans being united. I see our flag as a symbol of unity, a real and lasting unifying factor. If we just hold together as one country and see ourselves united in our flag, only then we can focus forward. At that moment, we wouldn't be considering ethnicity, corruption, or political and religious differences. We would be looking at development and at the brightness of our future. In my surroundings, you can see that we have a beautiful landscape, mountains and much more. I see myself in the painting in a relaxed mood. I value so many things. My love for my country and for the people who surround me. I always deal with the people I work with, and surround myself, with honesty. I treasure forgiveness. It is in me and it makes me who I am. I have a lot of trust in people.

In my painting, there is a beautiful sun. It indicates that every day can be an inspiration, to make ourselves better than we already are. On one side of my painting, there are people who are following and eagerly waiting to hold the flag. It seems as if I'm walking towards something, going somewhere. I'm still struggling and walking towards what is inside me [her personal goals] and trying to engage with the people, who are outside of me.

This makes me remember the time when I went on a peace mission in Lamu; when I was travelling back. It was immediately after the Mpeketoni attack and a police officer stopped me. I told him I was coming from Lamu, the Mpeketoni area. He asked me why we Somalis were killing people. I felt really bad. It really affected me. Imagine, this is a Kenyan police officer talking to you!

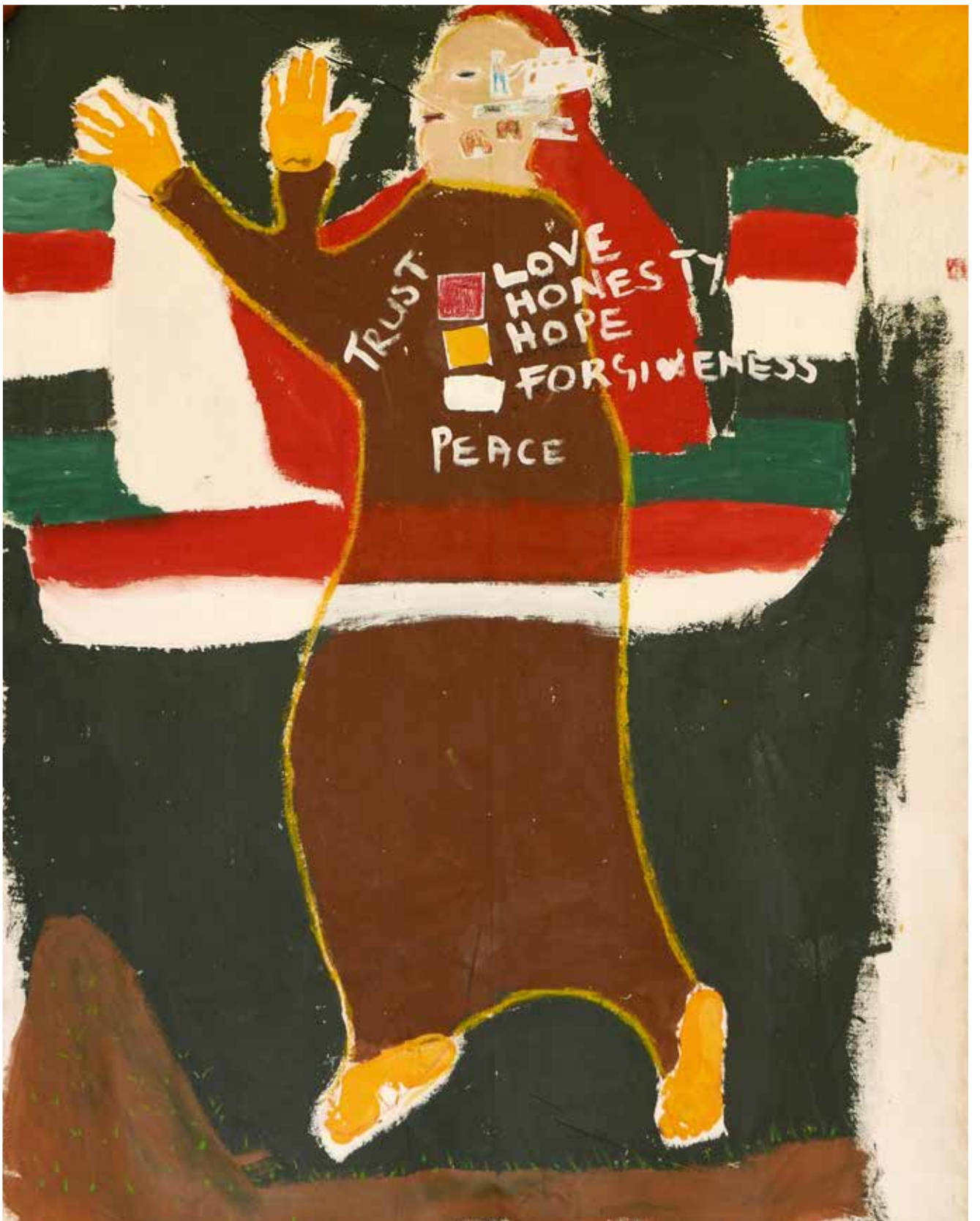
I did not just fear for myself but I also feared for the people around that area. How can a police officer talk and react this way? How can he relate to the people surrounding him? Once I got home, I had to call my friend, who is a non-Somali, and ask her how she felt about me. How do you perceive me? And I asked if she thought I was involved in what was happening.

She said no. That the police officer who stopped me was simply ignorant and should not have reacted that way. My friend helped me to reconcile with myself. Events such as al-Shabaab attacks make me think about how people perceive each other. When I see Muslims or Somalis saying they have been harassed or that some youths are disappearing, I always remember what happened to me. We need to fight discrimination and understand each other better.

I have used different colours on my Body Map: yellow, red and white. They represent the moments I treasure most. They mean that I love to be surrounded by peace. Yesterday, when I went to the mosque, I saw two young ladies quarrelling. I felt compelled to engage with one of them and try to help her. It is always in me. I hope for the best, always. I try not to focus on the small negative things but instead work to reconcile a situation.

This whole exercise, especially the Body Mapping, was a moment of reflection, a journey, trying to know myself better. By thinking and talking deeply to myself, because of remembering some forgotten things as a result of the questions I was asked here, this Body Mapping process gave me an opportunity to think about my origins, what it really means, creating an image and a reflection around my ideas and experiences.

It was a moment of deep critical thinking.



AFTERWORD

On Peacebuilding, Art and Body Mapping

Peacebuilding scholars and practitioners increasingly acknowledge that sustainable peace is built on more than rational engagement between people. Conflicts are not amenable to transformation through analytic processes alone. They require forms of personal expression that embrace contradictions and inconsistencies, and give voice to thoughts and feelings that go beyond words and logic.

Art can provide a space and opportunity for positive change. It can tell and interpret people's stories, heal trauma, mend communities, makes spaces for marginalised people and groups, protest injustice, educate populations, express heritage, define and interrogate identity, and engage youth with alternatives to violence. Art can also create new visions of peaceful coexistence between people.

Body Mapping is a form of art. It is a creative process that brings together lived bodily experience and visual artistic expression. Most of those who participate in this method of self-expression depict the experience of Body Mapping as a journey of self-discovery. This journey reveals new ground for cooperation across different cultures and traditions, and helps lead those on its path to greater self-realisation, as a person and as a community.

Importantly, Body Mapping humanises “the other” by encouraging those who engage in this process to recognise their commonalities amidst their differences. Since the individuals portrayed in the Body Maps are never reduced to stereotypes but rather express their personally lived experiences in an environment where respect and empathy prevail, these artworks have the potential to break down barriers, both in the process of their development and in sharing them with a wider audience.

The Body Mapping process also instils a greater sense of shared responsibility among those who participate in

fulfilling their role as agents of change and as Kenyan citizens. By the end of the process, Body Mapping becomes a formative experience that pictures Kenya in all its complexities—historic, cultural, ethnic, economic, social and political.

This is art that aims to inspire, elicit, evoke, provoke, teach, challenge, memorialise, idealise and unmask hidden truths. This is art for building peace.

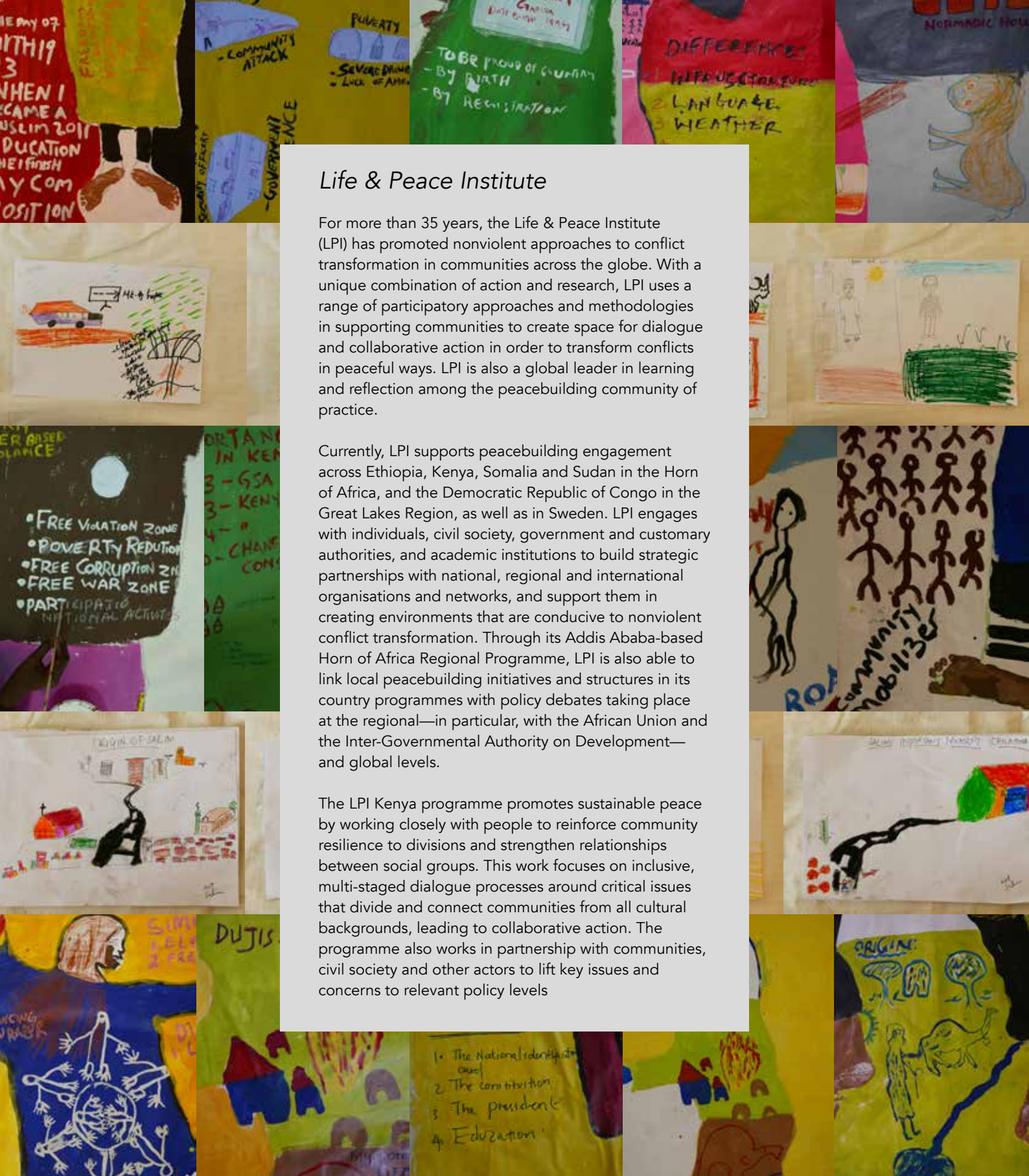
Art2Be

For many years, Art2be has had the privilege to facilitate workshops that encourage visual creativity and verbal expression for non-professional artists. Founded in 2006 and based in Nairobi, Art2Be is an organisation of artists, psychologists, social workers and community activists. Art2Be seeks to promote positive living and social change through artistic and expressive processes that engage individual participants and the public through workshops and participatory projects focused on questions of inclusion/exclusion, identity/heritage and culture/politics.

As a person and as an artist, I have come to believe that the participants in this Body Mapping project are the only ones who can make these portraits. Composed of powerful marks, signs and vivid colours, these Body Maps create a new language for those who have made them. It is only they who can share these artistic expressions with their community. They all speak eloquently of the world in which we as Kenyans live. They are our self-portraits as Kenyans.

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Life & Peace Institute

For more than 35 years, the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) has promoted nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation in communities across the globe. With a unique combination of action and research, LPI uses a range of participatory approaches and methodologies in supporting communities to create space for dialogue and collaborative action in order to transform conflicts in peaceful ways. LPI is also a global leader in learning and reflection among the peacebuilding community of practice.

Currently, LPI supports peacebuilding engagement across Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan in the Horn of Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the Great Lakes Region, as well as in Sweden. LPI engages with individuals, civil society, government and customary authorities, and academic institutions to build strategic partnerships with national, regional and international organisations and networks, and support them in creating environments that are conducive to nonviolent conflict transformation. Through its Addis Ababa-based Horn of Africa Regional Programme, LPI is also able to link local peacebuilding initiatives and structures in its country programmes with policy debates taking place at the regional—in particular, with the African Union and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development—and global levels.

The LPI Kenya programme promotes sustainable peace by working closely with people to reinforce community resilience to divisions and strengthen relationships between social groups. This work focuses on inclusive, multi-staged dialogue processes around critical issues that divide and connect communities from all cultural backgrounds, leading to collaborative action. The programme also works in partnership with communities, civil society and other actors to lift key issues and concerns to relevant policy levels