



NEWS BULLETIN 319
THURSDAY NOVEMBER 29, 2018

Former Enemies Unite Over Cows in Kenya *Heifers for Peace* Transforms Pastoralist Conflict



Friends from the Samburu and Pokot tribes meet their new cow

Esther Lenosilale, a Samburu, can remember how the bullets whistled through the family compound when the Samburu and Pokot tribes last

fought over cows. It was so frightening that her children slept with their shoes on in case they were forced to flee for their lives.



Naomi left, a Pokot, and Anne, a Samburu, with Hilary Bukuno, the founder of CPI Kenya. The girls became friends at a CPI Kenya peace camp. Their families received a cow at the recent ceremony.

The violence seemed a world away last week when Esther met Joyce Leiririo, a Pokot mother, and made plans to raise a cow with her. Esther will keep the cow until it gives birth, but the calf will go to Joyce. In the meantime, the two women expect their friendship to deepen.

Esther and Joyce were among 101 family members from the Pokot and Samburu tribes who took possession of 51 cows at a ceremony last Saturday deep in the hills of Kenya's Rift Valley.

The cow handover rounded off several years of innovative peace-building in Samburu County by [Children Peace Initiative Kenya \(CPI\)](#), a group with deep roots in the pastoralist communities. The efforts have paid off - there has been no fighting between Pokot and Samburu since 2012.

CPI Kenya purchased the 51 cows with funds raised by [Talley Diggs](#) and [Colleen Denny](#), two Peace Fellows from The Advocacy Project (AP). Iain Guest from AP attended the Sunday ceremony.

CPI Kenya's model begins by bringing children from warring tribes together. CPI Kenya has organized 14 camps for 4,400 children since 2011. Esther's son Caleb was one of the first to attend.

CPI Kenya's model begins by bringing children from warring tribes together. CPI Kenya has organized 14 camps for 4,400 children since 2011.



Joyce (Pokot) and Esther (Samburu) look forward to raising a cow together.

CPI Kenya's model begins by bringing children from warring tribes together. CPI Kenya has organized 14 camps for 4,400 children since 2011. Esther's son Caleb was one of the first to attend.

CPI Kenya then builds on friendships made by children at the camps and offers their parents a cow if they agree to raise it with a family from the other side.

The project is known as *Heifers for Peace*.

"We're trying to give them an incentive not to return to fighting," said Hilary Bukuno, the founder and director of CPI Kenya. He explained that cows are highly valued by all tribes and reflect a family's standing. A young cow currently sells for about \$200.



Turning out for cows: These Samburu girls looked their best at the recent ceremony to hand over cows.

As peace has taken hold between the Pokot and Samburu, former warriors have turned from cattle rustling to tracking and returning stolen animals.

The two sides are also sharing pasture land and water. Esther and Joyce agreed that Esther will take their cow at first because the Samburu land gets more rain. In other signs of deepening cooperation, the two

tribes are sharing government services and trading at the same markets.

CPI Kenya does not claim all of the credit for this transformation, but government officials described *Heifers for Peace* as a "model for others" and the best way to stop cattle rustling at the recent ceremony.

The greatest threat to this innovative program comes from drought, which has forced pastoralists to move into the land of other tribes and decimated herds. Some fear that this could make rustling more appealing.



Peace Fellows Colleen, seen here, and Talley raised over \$15,000 for Heifers for Peace.

Even CPI Kenya's cows have not been immune to drought. Kip Kyeng, a former Pokot warrior, heads one of 80 families to receive cows in the last hand-out, in 2015. He received a bull calf from his Samburu partner in October but the animal died. Mr Kyeng has now lost 12 of his 14 cows and is hoping that his Samburu friend will give him the next calf to be born.

Encouraged by their success with the Pokot and Samburu, CPI Kenya hopes to take the model to Baragoi sub-county, where Turkana (top photo) and Samburu have fought for years. Several deaths have been reported from Baragoi this year.

- * View the [photos of 2018 Peace Fellow Colleen Denny](#)
- * View the [photos of 2017 Peace Fellow Talley Diggs](#)
- * Visit the [website of CPI Kenya](#).

Thanks to Humanity United for supporting our 2018 program



HUMANITY
UNITED