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Tribal Artists Use Cow Quilt to Promote Peace at UN Summit in Nairobi



Cow quilters: Joyce, Bobbi and Salaiton at ICPD25.

Standing in front of an imposing quilt that they helped to produce, Salaiton Lenguris and Joyce Leiririo proudly made the case for peace between pastoralists in northwest Kenya, at last week's UN summit on women and girls in Nairobi.

Dressed in their traditional Samburu garb, the two women posed for selfies as they described their quilt. They also explained how they had been among the first Samburu to offer friendship to mothers and children from the Pokot tribe when Pokot were considered enemies.

This was one of many unusual scenes that played out during the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, which ended last Thursday. Led by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), much of the discussion was about reproductive rights and health. But the conference also served as a joyous, if serious, gathering for thousands of participants seeking to empower women and girls.

[Thirty-two governments](#) have so far promised funds to finance new ICPD25 initiatives.

Ms Lenguris and Ms Leiririo were among 33 women on the delegation of The Advocacy Project (AP). AP exhibited 18 quilts from 14 countries, including three that had not been shown before.

One of the three quilts, *A Woman's World*, was completed during the conference by 23 women from Nairobi who used their squares to describe the impact of overcrowding, domestic violence and poor services on women and girls. AP will post their profiles online shortly.

The *Zimbabwe Child Marriage Quilt* was used by Constance Mugari, founder of Women Advocacy Project (WAP) in Harare, to denounce early marriage.



Cows for peace: Hilary Bukuno from CPIK briefs reporters.

The third quilt - *The Kenya Cow Quilt* - was presented by Children Peace Initiative Kenya (CPIK), an AP partner which organizes peace camps for children from warring tribes in northwest Kenya.

As well as contributing to the quilt, Ms Lenguris and Ms Leiririo were among the first mothers to send their children to a CPIK peace camp and Hilary Bukuno, the founder of CPIK,

praised their courage. No fighting has been reported between Pokot and Samburu for some years.

The backing for the cow quilt was made by Bobbi Fitzsimmons, a leading American quilter and AP Board member who attended the Nairobi Summit as a trainer and advisor. Ms Lenguris said that Ms Fitzsimmons's design had perfectly captured the arid nature of Samburu County, where drought is forcing pastoralists to take their cattle into the grazing land of other tribes and triggering conflict.

It was the first time the two Samburu artists had visited their capital and both said that exposure to an international conference had given them confidence. They also said that attaching beads to cloth, as they did for the cow quilt, is new to Samburu culture: "We want to do more!"

This was echoed by Mr Bukuno, who used the cow quilt to explain CPIK's work to reporters and visitors throughout the ICPD25 Summit. "Quilts are a powerful way to tell our story," he said.

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