

Personal Statement, July 2022

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Children Peace Initiative Kenya (CPI Kenya), Nairobi, Kenya

Dear JJCF Supporters,

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude for your contribution towards my fellowship in Kenya this summer with the Advocacy Project and Children Peace Initiative (CPI) Kenya. It has been the experience of a lifetime and it would not have been possible without your support.

During my fellowship I worked with CPI Kenya to create two new startups that expands their peace-building programs for pastoralist communities and helps them incorporate climate change adaptation measures. CPI Kenya has worked with pastoralists in the midst of tribal conflict for over a decade via peace camps with children from two opposing tribes. But through these new startups, CPI Kenya will begin to venture into new peace-building programs that target women and young men. The [Women's Business Network](#) and [Cow Camp](#) startups will help pastoralist communities adapt to climate change by empowering pastoralist women to create sustainable livelihoods and creating avenues for herders/*moran* (pastoralist warriors) to share resources between tribes, such as pastureland. I've kept a [blog](#) throughout my fellowship that talks more about the startups, pastoralist lifestyle, and the intersection of conflict and climate change.

Professionally, I will be unpacking lessons learned for months to come. I gained experience creating peace-building programs, budgets, project trackers, monitoring and evaluation systems, and fundraising campaigns. The CPI Kenya founders were mentors in peace-building and development, but they also made sure that at every turn we prioritized the needs of the participants. I was inspired daily by their commitment to not let outside agendas drive their work, but to make decisions every day that included the needs/goals of people in their programs—pastoralist communities.

My fellowship with CPI Kenya has also helped me better understand the dynamic between funders and community-based organizations. I keep coming back to the important need to support and fund implementing partners like CPI Kenya. I witnessed firsthand that they are the folks with the local networks, understanding, and nuance to do community service that “does no harm.” At the end of the day, CPI Kenya and local NGOs will remain long after USAID or Amnesty International pack up their tents (not to say that these organizations/agencies don't do good work).

Personally, this summer was exhilarating but very difficult. It was hard to be away from my husband, our home, and the comforts of our life in Washington D.C. Some of the transitions to Kenyan life, especially in rural areas, were quite difficult to adapt to and I was lonely a lot of the time. I pushed myself to my limits and made it through situations I never previously imagined myself in.

That being said, I would absolutely choose to do it all over again. I learned about a new country and its culture, the pastoralist lifestyle, gained new friends, tried new food, traveled across Kenya, spent the night with over 200 pastoralist warriors at a cow camp, and met some of the

most inspiring businesswomen. This experience expanded my understanding of development-driven peace-building, climate change, Kenyan culture, and the world around me.

I am extremely honored to have learned about peace-building from the experts at CPI Kenya and about myself in the process. I see this fellowship as the beginning of a long partnership between myself and CPI Kenya, and look forward to seeing what the future holds for such an innovative organization.

Thank you again for your support in such an inspiring and transformative fellowship.

With warm regards,
Julia Holladay