

KAAD scholars joining the visit of the DBK delegation to Turkana on Thursday, 6th June 2024

Joseph Elim Epuu comes from the Turkana community and his home parish, Good Shepherd Parish Kakuma, is located next to the refugee camp. As a visually impaired person he had to fight obstacles in his school and university career.

He was very active in his parish as a teenager (catechist and volunteer teacher at Kakuma Girls' Primary School). He did a Bachelor of Education at Kenyatta University in Nairobi (KU) and was very active in the parish council at the Catholic Chaplaincy there and also in lobbying for disabled students. After graduating, he initially worked back in his home area as a teacher at two different Catholic secondary schools. He also has experience in the area of international organizations as he worked as psychosocial counsellor and conflict resolution officer at the refugee camp in Kakuma, working for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and as Civic Education Program Officer for Oxfam. He also worked for the Catholic Diocese of Lodwar as Deputy Coordinator Justice and Peace.

For his Masters course in Political Studies (again at KU) he received a KAAD-InCountry scholarship from 2010-2012.

He served in the first Turkana county government as the county chief officer for energy, environment and natural resources. He then went into politics and was elected to the Turkana County assembly/local parliament but after one term moved back into administration where he is now the Chief Officer-Youth and Gender Affairs of Turkana County.

During his service in administration, he has done a second masters degree in Public Administration and Management at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kakamega. Currently he is am undertaking PhD studies in political science and public administration at Moi university in Eldoret.

He has also founded a research firm called "Napakurian Wisdom and Consultancy". With this he has managed to give scholarship to 20 students for secondary school and university studies.

Mathew Etabo Edung comes from the Turkana community and did his bachelor's degree (Agriculture & Human Ecology) at Egerton University, Njoro near Nakuru. He completed his master's degree (Agronomy) at Kenyatta University in Nairobi and returned to Turkana. He has professional experience as an employee of an international NGO (Solidarites International) in the agricultural sector and also at the agricultural department of the local administration (Turkana County). In 2019, he became a lecturer at Turkana University College, the first state university in the region. He was very involved in his home parish and also in an NGO called "Desert Vision". Since 2021 he has been a KAAD scholar for his doctorate in agricultural science (Institute for Plant Nutrition and Soil Science, University of Kiel).

He has now founded an NGO where he himself is Secretary and Executive Director. It is called "BRM Kenya" and the profile says: "A legally registered NGO with a focus on humanitarian assistance and development of both refugees, the internally-displaced and the local host communities in Kenya. Sectors involved are Humanitarian assistance & Emergency Interventions, Food security & alternative livelihoods' interventions, WASH, Energy & Environment, Education, Health, Cross border peace initiatives, community integration & cohesion, and Advocacy, Leadership and Governance." Among the goals listed in more detail is: "To initiate cross border peace campaigns for bordering communities (Nyangatom Toposa, Tepes, Dassanach, Karamoja, and the Turkana people etc) and refugees in the camps through cohesion and integration methodologies."

In this initiative for peace building between the Turkana and Nyangatom on the so-called "Kibish Corridor" he connects with the scholarship holder Charles Peyo Arupur.

Charles Peyo Arupur comes from the Nyangatom community in the Lower Omo Valley region in southwest Ethiopia. After his brother (with whom he always looked after the animals together) was killed and there were conflicts with his parents, he decided to leave home at the age of 11 and finally arrived in Kenya via South Sudan, where he lived, went to school and later completed his bachelor's degree. He worked at an agricultural research station (Kenya Agricultural Livestock Research Organization) and then returned home, where he worked for several NGOs (Nyangatom Development Association, Nyangatom Woreda, Ethiopia; Peace and Development Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). In 2021 he travelled to Germany on his own initiative and financing and studied the master's course in Public Policy at the Willy Brandt School at the University of Erfurt. He applied for a KAAD through the Catholic Chaplaincy in Erfurt and the scholarship was granted (within KAAD's "Scholarship Programme 2") from 2022-2023. After the master course, he returned to his native Omo Valley, where he has since been working on the further development of the NGO he founded.

At the University of Erfurt, Charles received the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy Commitment Award for the "Cattle Raid Child Care and Reintegration Project" for the care and reintegration of children from families who were victims of cattle theft in Ethiopia. "It aims to provide these children with comprehensive care, protection and support through family-based counselling, education and vocational training to better integrate them into society and overcome their trauma."

He is the founder and director of the NGO "Initiative for Pastoralist Communication". This NGO is geographically focused on the southern valley of the Omo River, which flows into Lake Turkana. One of the most prominent communities there are the Nyangatom, who live on both sides of the Ethiopian-Kenyan border and are often involved in conflicts with the Turkana ("Kibish Corridor" - the town of Kibish is right on the border on the Kenyan side). The NGO he leads lists in its profile: "Local organization working with the pastoralist communities in South Omo, Ethiopia. It networks with community local structures and supports community-led development initiatives in order to improve livelihoods conditions."

There is currently an application for USAID funding for a project entitled "Cross-Border Community Resilience (CBCR)". Further objectives are "Collaboratively advocating for the improvement and implementation of cross-border policies, legislations, plans, and agreements e.g., on animal health, taxation, and trade, and facilitating the awareness to ease the movement of goods and people across borders leading to enhanced social cohesion & trade."