

# Trauma Informed Practice in Africa

## ITAC THINK TANK: July 2021

*Hosted by Green String Network*

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This is one of ITAC Collaborative's monthly Think Tank sessions. Each session focuses on a new theme and is hosted by someone from a different country.

In July of 2021 Bonface Beti and Dr. Angi Yoder-Maina explored ways to engage with the world's problems through healing-centered peacebuilding. The Green String Network (GSN), where both take employment, investigates how chronic violence has impacted communities and integrates a holistic approach to breaking cycles of violence within said communities.

There is a need for mental health support not just in East Africa but the whole world. Every hour, there are individuals who cannot afford therapy, have limited access or reject the practices as a viable resource. Thus GSN has started to develop an arts and cultural piece to engage in community mental health prevention.

The key to the approach is that the interventions are not just about raising awareness, but seeking to create behavioral change, so that people who are hurting stop hurting others. So at GSN, they use storytelling art embodied practices to help people articulate their life experiences and recognize how they shape their behavior. Here, these methods help unlock new ways of thinking, behaving, and feeling, to live more full and peaceful lives as individuals and communities.

Dive deeper into Bonface Beti & Dr. Angi Yoder-Maina's session by visiting their learning module page on ITAC's website.

Instances in which the text is in ellipses in parentheses (...) indicate when the sound was indecipherable for transcription.

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### **Bonface Beti**

Yeah, thank thank you, everyone, wherever you are in the world, in Nairobi, Kenya, where I'm speaking from is 6pm. In the evening, so good morning in the US, I'm sure. And then in Scotland, UK, Australia, maybe later on, I like it in the night. So we're very happy. We are very

privileged, me and my colleague, Angie, speaking to you from Nairobi, Kenya. And we are speaking about our work, which is healing centered this building. I worked with this organization called the green string network. Angie is the executive director, she will speak for herself. But so today, our work is looking at how chronic violence has impacted mostly our communities in East African the horn as a place to learn lessons for the globe. So it's called the Healing Center, this building approach that has come out of many years of the trauma -informed work that started the journey that was started by these builders in this part of the world. So it's a real privilege for us to be able to speak. To share our conversations around this work, I come to this work.

I was first of all an artist before I became an artist builder. And I am also still an artist and a storyteller. I have worked in many parts of the world, I have gone to many conflicts to apply ad based approaches to specifically theater, with communities that are caught up in cycles of violence. So it's a great privilege to be here to share my experiences. But that journey led me into now what I'm doing the peacebuilding Healing Center is building approach, which looks at integrating a holistic approach to breaking cycles of violence within our communities. From my own lived experience, as an African as and as a Kenyan, it and also lived experience as a practitioner. artist, it is a very great opportunity to learn a lot of lessons. So at this point, I would like also to give this opportunity to my colleague, Angie to be able to share a little bit about her role and how this work is important to us. And it means the whole world for us.

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

Hi, good morning. Good evening. Good wherever you are in the world. Bonface and I are in the same room. So we have to kind of make sure our speakers work. But we're sitting across from each other.

Nice to see all of you. It's a really nice surprise to see John and Wendy from Australia. I didn't expect to hear, so that's great. Hi. And so the rest of you my name is Angi Yodi-Maina . I'm a Kenyan-American who lives and works here in East Africa and the horn. We have been doing work and you'll find out as we do our presentations. Bonface and I are very passionate about this work. We can talk on and on and on. But we're really happy to actually share it with you today. It's a different type of work, how we're actually able to bring in storytelling, and artists and engage with images at really the most lowest village area to be able to take images and pictures to people to be able to do their own storytelling. So I think without that, I think we're going to just jump into our presentations. Bonface is going to do first a very quick overview of kind of...how we use the images and pictures and what our work looks like with a couple of videos of mama Zodiac. And then I'm going to actually talk about our curriculum adaptation process and how we do it in various different places. So without that, I think we're going to hand it over to Bonface and he's going to share his screen now for the opportunity for us to present our work.

### **Bonface Beti**

Today, I want to share with you about the Healing Center is building work that we do in East African, the horn, so I would like just to provide a warning that some of these paintings that some of these work might be triggering, specifically, because of the photos, that, but they're mainly watercolor paintings that we use in our work, that may depict images of abuse and very

deep issues, if you feel upset with the images can be, feel free to get in touch with us, or you can be able to speak to us about what came up for you or any other person that you feel comfortable to share with.

Yeah, so I'm going, I would like to start with a short analogy. So this is an analogy that we use, because of the part of the world but from what we have learned from our work. And it's called the craft cup analogy. If you look at this cup, you see what is happening to the cup. It has holes at the bottom. So imagine that this cup was like a community. You know. And without the holes and the convention that is broken, what happens if I pour water through this cup into this cup that has loss? We can all see what happens. The water leaks. And what if this kind of cracks in the communities and we are pouring resources in the communities, all the resources leak out, and they spill out from these communities? Now, this is how chronic violence impacts and creates what appears like cracks within communities. And that is what our work has been attempting to respond to. In this part of the world, specifically in East Africa and the horn what types of cracks for example.

As we share this presentation, think about some of the cracks that you know exist in some of the communities that you come from, or you know, what are some of these cracks? These cracks can also be witnessed in various ways, including, for example, creating cycles of violence, desperation and destruction, and also breaking down institutions, specifically, so for societies that are also impacted by colonialism, for example, from the yesterday, yes. And then you have for example, they it actually conscious images, for example, for example, young people during election conflict in most countries, like for example, in my country, Kenya, where I come from, we will just be having an election next year 2022. And these are some of the things that to witness every five years of elections, as a country, young people burning, protesting and rioting on the streets. Then you have our security officers, for example, expressing their violence on citizens, the citizens that they are meant to protect, as guarantors of law and protection through the state. But the citizens end up being violated by security officers. Then you have you know, that distress, the toxic stress and the trauma and the violence that that we carry, we take it back home to our loved ones as police or security officers or police officers or as event people that do the kind of work that we do in some of the most difficult places of the world. countries that are impacted by conflict and chronic violence. And then you have a rise rates increase and rises in issues of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. Or even in the streets in some countries. And no one for example, gender safety becomes a pipe dream. It's not something that is working. And it conjures images of the cycles of violence continuing. And then every five years we turn against each other during election cycles of election violence, as I have just explained earlier on, we will have it next year. And most Kenyans are scared because they don't know what will happen. There is collective trauma because of that. And then you have since September 11, and many other attacks that are happening in countries like my country, Kenya, the westgate attack, Garissa University attack, to seek to attack, you know, through violent extremism. There is something we call the one terrorist the securitization of war on terror, where communities are invaded by security officers. And people are beaten up, rounded up arrested, because of and their rights are abused. And then you have issues, for example of widespread poverty, a lot of young people in Kenya have come from these kinds of

backgrounds. Even though probably they manage to become older, and they do other things. For example, some of them could be like many of us who are doing the work that we are doing. But this kind of childhood is a commonplace occurrence in my country, and many of African countries and many other countries events, the West. So abject poverty itself is a form of oppression and violence. And it's traumatizing. And then these all these leaders into what people are, for example, it takes us beyond the fact that mental issues become like issues of everyday struggles of people, resisting, for example, oppression, and violence in their everyday lives, it moves beyond just being the small lens of mental health, becoming larger issues of, of social justice, and people standing up to create, to heal themselves, but also to heal the societies they are part of. And this cannot be done for them by other people. But this is something that people, if they reclaim their agency, they begin all by themselves, to heal themselves and to engage with these structural issues, beyond the mental health lenses that are biomedical and propagated by global capitalism. So you have also the issues of rise in youth suicide rates that you are witnessing, especially in my country, I've heard that an explosion in youth in suicides because of collective trauma from COVID-19. But also, issues that have been underlying for many years are now coming to the surface because they are exacerbated by the pandemic. And then, for example, there is addictions and substance abuse, which has been normalized. And these directly affects families that we see in our everyday people's lives. And then stress of daily daily life because of work, because we have to pay the price of working so hard to pay for our lives, get money, get shillings get dollars, get all the things that we desire to live a comfortable life, if there is such a thing, and then we have also seen arises in distrust among neighbors, based on identity based on different identity issues, divisions, rising up gender divisions, and all these kinds of markers that have become commonplace in many who feel hurt or excluded. They are, for example, this crackdown by a government based on the identity, their religious identity, or wherever they come from, globally. You know, for example, people that are crossing the Mediterranean trying to reach you, or the newcomer groups in North America or even in Kenya for my neighboring conflicts for from countries that are around us that have lived here for many years, and the Kenyan themselves who live in oppression. So as you have seen in the last paintings, those who feel that they are hot, they now start to hurt others. You know, and this the cycles of hurting others becomes something that happens every day. It becomes continuous cycles of hurting others. And it only grows into it brutes, more violence, physical. And here I'll show you a video of Mama zoria and her son.

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

I want you to breathe five times. One Fabian in that safe space, and the open lies when you are ready and telling me how you feel. Zilla sick. We're practicing our persona. Lily de PUE Tiana Mambo and biocarbon Nicholas years younger for community. Amanda Murphy mahna mahna Mambo biopharma. Yeah GDP geographical mindshare because you're lucky enough to have one year to put your trainee in the final week of human kumbakonam linefeed Come on has this my adequate so much happened the other scene accidentally. Maybe at the end of town Hakuna will belong to Kenya dequindre. Be decided, you know what, Patrick? you're eligible to come and buy I decided to end so maybe tomorrow will happen. Summer. Right. Now Poonam to banana cumbia, you will get betrayed I want.

## **Bonface Beti**

Yeah so now we have now created a new way of doing this kind of work, where we are using paintings and visual art and storytelling. We decided to do this to move away from always doing workshops because that is what is common in most of our society communities here. And now we want to focus on community healing. The how to is that our new format is a 12 week program, led by community volunteers and groups meet for two hours a weekend talk and share in the heal. The 12 weeks conclude with a call for everyone to leave the cycle of victimhood and to choose to be a resource for peace. During the global collective trauma summit in October 2019 Dr. Chris in better noted we are a society organized based on trauma. So we need to go from being trauma organized to being trauma informed And then eventually healing centered. So understanding that many people had others out of their own real and passive victim mode allows each one of us to begin to reflect on when each one of us have crossed that line. And to begin to emphasize with the other. In our experiences, this began to give people a choice. When the choices spilled back, we begin to see real healing processes happening, where people realize they do not have, they actually do have a choice. And they do not have to engage in violence. Now, I will show you a number of the healing images that we have developed for our program. Yeah, in East African, the horn. And these are what peace and security looks like, or can look like in our context, actually. And these images, they show the truth telling a bit they are part of like the ones you will see, they're part of the suit selling photo exhibition that was embarked across Kenya, after the 2008 post election violence. So sitting under a tree with neighbors and the elders, connecting through our daily stories and our lives and laughing together is part of the healing process that we have seen happening in most of these communities that wounded and broken. So the connection, the daily stories, bring out triumph from people's lives, and then laughing together is part of the healing process and healing agenda by everyday people that we have mentioned before. Also, we find even for among security, actors or community members that families also find a lot of healing, to loving one another and connecting the connection becomes the points of healing and transformation. When healing adds up, and also local economies work for our villages and rural homes, because shops can open and people can be able to go to their day to do their daily chores and lives, lives go back to normal women can be able to go to the market than men can be able also to do their work, shops can open food can be accessed. Cause you notice that we have a lot of images that touch on the family, it's because we believe that if we heal our families, we heal our nations. And when you have healing, then the kind of frustration that comes from systems justices and that don't work, you know, finally reduce, and people start to have some faith in the justice system, even if there could be more improvements to the justice systems. So to conclude, I would love to show you the process of healing that mamas Maria led her community in even with the challenge that she was personally facing. So here is Angi Yodi-Maina, again.

## **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

I want you to wave five times. an hour. Two, three. Breathe out. CBN in a safe space, and the open lies when you are ready. In February how you feel new nitros Real Madrid. Nanny ma Taka samyama Jenga. Minimum linea. About makuta makuta it's about trauma. Capital karma. Zilla siku ecart is in upasana military coup de la Mambo and biocarbon request he is yoga

community.

I'm Anna Murphy. I'm an hour total I'm an anatomy Cooper now so eloquently mumbo jumbo Yeah, really big. I got to combine shiancoe because you rewind, like in in illiquidity reform in the casino floor one via you got to me Not quite. So you do training and you finally got more human in now. We're going to talk about your training to the MB awa 240. What we'll work on our z two comma cc in a safe space when the kabale kuumba higher man in Ohio catoca engine na truly fully Armenian not to be fully under Cambodian pocketful of sessions here cooling Gannon asili teacher Masako Martin Watanabe, where Felicia training Zilla quasi Cuba boosa Santa Monica, most of them are working on me me. Me Me, only mean similar topics so to Zilla gusa is poco la la casa Santa the journey of life Katya my Shama whoo Mama Mama, mama mama mama terracotta Naga stones are katika daga Mumbai Nanda resort called Nika flowers, but for Medina Illa, corny masala Hakka flowers the whole journey Anika may look for two stones trauma meaning kinematic yamaoka by ioniser took a column packet Ashkenazim chronometer gamma gamma you're not okay or owner's equity or Chilean omekata monemvasia so he program Illa to boost Attica hayati. Do me show mambukal to come back. Like any Sasa in case he took me back to Nigeria tuna tuna Villa Kenya is a kabillion and among like any challenges Azuma Zico, ningyo makela, moja, ambae, akamba, Ana Zika, kumiko Agia choco to matrei Neela my participants were to put me on a train Why did to to defend they sought a mother to render their nursing home by issue. Now I hope it has idea weighing you know, trend impact machine learning to our to our natural.

### **Bonface Beti**

So, here is the vision that we have just developed for our program about how we can scale these work throughout East African, the horn. They are the components that Green String Network would like to bring in partnerships with others, we're already working at community level, different parts of the world, in Africa and in the world. Now, we take a look also at the cup. Remember my cups, what can you see now my cup is now repaired. It's not perfect, but I can use it. I can use it. You know, the water as I wish now I can take a sip. I can sell with my neighbor. I can water my garden or even take a bath. So healing comes with healing comes the ability to make a choice to see choice and to make that choice. I believe this similar to and are committed to be this is similar to when a community begins on its own healing process. In increasing networks, we see communities reclaiming their own healing agenda. It gives people and communities new choices. They just not have when everything was controlled by outsiders and their community cup was leaking. Thank you for your time. And for your listeners.

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

The need for mental health support probably grows not just here in East Africa, the horn, but maybe in the whole world. Every hour, not just every day. When people however like here, they can't afford therapy. They live in places where there's limited access. Some, like my own husband, would say that's not for me, that's culturally what you guys out there in the West do. We need other solutions that work that are culturally grounded. Thus GSN has started to develop this arts and cultural piece to engage in community mental health prevention. And before I do that, we're going to all stand up. And we're going to do what we've been sitting for a

little bit, so we're going to do a little bit of an embodied practice that comes from our work. And this is called the dance of the palm trees. And it's just a couple, it's just a couple minutes, but I'm going to let it play now.

### **Video**

She's very beautiful how they move in the wind. This exercise is very fun, and requires a user's imagination. Stand with your feet on the ground and notice how the ground fields just to shift your weight from side to side. Notice how the pressure feels underneath your feet. As you continue moving from side to side, lift your hands like boundaries. When breathing, in through your nose and out through your mouth. As you continue to move like a pump. You can carry out this movement 10 times when you are comfortable, you can change the direction your hands move. Once you stop, notice how your body feels and pay attention towards us. That is the dance of the function.

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

Now we're a little bit more awake. So our approach has the grounding foundation of what we call the healing centered peacebuilding approach. This is actually an approach that we developed the theory based on our practice. And both Wanda and Wendy who are here on the call were both part of the research because they're both involved in this type of work as well. Healing centered peacebuilding is strength based, it recognizes that systems and structures supporting recovery and rebuilding are often as greatly damaged. As what they're trying to fix by the same violence and the same trauma issues. Remember that cup that Bonface talked about? It's just like that. So the key to the approach is that the interventions aren't just about raising awareness saying, Hey, this is what trauma is. But it seeks to use the work to help create behavior change, so that people who are hurting others stop hurting others.

We're a social healing movement that doesn't only work with communities, but you saw a lot of our images had police officers in them. So we're working a lot with the Kenyan police. We hope to work with the Somali military in the coming few months. And it's not just individual focused, we deal with the individual and family. But we also move to issues that are around social and collective healing, and also the collective and social pain. So at GSN, we use storytelling art embodied practices like the palm tree, to help people to begin to articulate their life experiences that they've been through and recognize how they shape their behavior. Then we use these methods to help unlock new ways of thinking, behaving, and feeling, so that they can live more full and peaceful lives as individuals and communities.

The healing process is first and fundamental step to building peace to having well being prosperity. And we start to fill that gap between peacebuilding, mental health and development, and I'll talk about that in the next slide. All of this adds up to that process of collective social healing. It's the missing piece that allows us to build foundations for well functioning and cohesive institutions, communities and also nations. We think this is what makes peace work.

We started this community work in 2000 here in Kenya, in northeastern Kenya. The project I was working on at that time was a cross border peacebuilding project. And it was an OK project,

but nothing special. We are doing what we said we do in our grant agreement. But a conflict emerged that threatened even our own program. And we asked the county or the district government at that time, if we could get involved, we were a peace building program. They told us No, security was their thing to deal with. They're the government, we should go and stay at home. And so we regrouped. And later we asked him, Well, could we come and do trauma healing. And with that, he said, Yeah, and come to my office first. And the little workshop that we did was for 30: teachers, the moms and nurses. And it's still described to this day, and that was in 2008, by people who attended that workshop, as a transformative time in their life. With that program of ours and their lives, it shifted, and it made the trauma work, the foundational piece of our program. And our program went from being just okay to being exceptional. The peacebuilding dialogues worked better, our peace dividends were more effective and useful. The governance work began to actually work.

In 2008, as there was this was on the Kenyan Somali border, so there was a lot of issues in 2011. Actually, Kenya and Ethiopia going in to deal with all Shabaab and all these different things are happening, but there was a clan conflict. And that clan conflict five years before had 5000 deaths tied to it. So it was something that with all the conflict going on in that area had was like the thing that could be the tipping point for, for a real disaster. And yet, within two weeks, that conflict was dealt with internally, by the different Somali clans, they didn't get any outside support, they did it on their own. And that conflict was, was one that could have been, you know, just set the place on fire, and it did it. And all of us watching wondered, Well, what happened, but then I started getting phone calls, like 50 phone calls, and some were just in, in Somali, some are shouting at me and in Swahili, for like English. But finally, they kept saying to me, Angie, it was the trauma, the trauma work we prepared and we were able to do this mediation because of the trauma work that we engaged in with the peace to program. And one elder particularly said he was one sitting at the mediation table. I could look across the table at my sworn enemy that other and when I looked at him, I actually for the first time I saw he was actually a person just like myself. And then he added it was because of the trauma work we had all done. So he and the other had done a trauma work, not together. But they've done it individually.

Our work at GSN, like I said, sits in that unique space between peacebuilding mental health and development. We're multidisciplinary, multi sectoral, but we have to be because violence is multidisciplinary and multisectorial. And so violence causes these deep social hurts deep collective traumas, and that they stop people for being able to live full and healthy lives as individuals and can be. And without healing these underlying hurts those wounds fester and become chronic violence and it becomes cyclical. So we need to heal the collective traumas that exist in communities if we're really going to build peace, that prosperity and well being for those long term and win employment implementing the healing centered programs, you saw all the different images that Bonnie was showing. Those come from all the different programs that we've done, we've developed with local communities and police officers in East Africa in the horn. It's important to adapt the curriculum and the design of these new materials. So the context of these new programs, and this process usually begins with finding the right partners to engage with it means that it ends with the production of these physical and digital materials now

because of COVID that are used to train and lead social healing processes in these new context by local partners who were working with. It involves a number of Parties from GSN staff to the adaptation and implementation part partners, specialists as well as members are representatives of the target participants that we want to be in these programs. So when we did the police work, police and civilians sat for a week, and told each other their stories that we then were able to eventually capture on those watercolor paintings that you saw. That's how we can actually by bringing people in to do co design and co development that it looks real, it looks like something that everybody can look at and say, Well, I know what that is, I have a story I that happened to me. So on the film, that's me, this is me. And this picture, the lady who's sitting at her desk holding your head, some days, I feel like that's me. The next slide. So our principles of adaptation include these different pieces inclusion, like I've just said, we bring everybody to the table, that cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance, adaptive materials have to be that way. A lot of issues that we have with transcribing like mental health, to communities all across the world, is that people's language, but those images, which are issues of being hurt, feeling depressed, feeling isolated, disconnected, you see those in the images, and that happens to people in real life in their context, they don't need to know that that is called depression, or that is called whatever it is in the DSM. You know, like, these are the things that now become really real. We develop those images and pictures from people's own stories. So they adopt the story to that. And that's what we give to the artists and that's how they paint it. And even the initial story, we may never actually use that as we go into the communities. But those pictures go into the communities. And then people tell their own stories from the original story. So the level of authenticity is really there. Then, oh Korea, Nigerian poet noted, "to poison a nice nation is to poison its stories". And he talks about and I quote him, people are as healthy and confident as the stories they tell themselves, storytellers can make a nation sick. Without stories, we'd go mad. Life would lose its mourning, and it's orientation. stories can conquer fear, you know, they make the heart larger, and have quote. So likewise, our stories are helpful for teaching and engaging. But it's not just our stories, it's their stories. And when we heal people's stories, that's when we start to help people find their own healing. There's continuous learning, every time we adapt. So we started this adaptation process in Somalia in 2013. And until today, and I'm getting ready to go back in and rebirth, redo the Somali version. Because we've had, it's like, we're on version eight or something. And we've learned each time and COVID has helped us learn because we've been able to see how we can take this stuff, put it onto digital form, and put it into WhatsApp groups. And we can do peer support programming like we do under the tree or in a police station physically. We're now doing it on WhatsApp and Google meets.

And our last principle of adaptation is that integration, taking what we've learned throughout all the different pieces in this region, and helping reintegrate it back. And then in the learning piece, having those who are using this, this method and Kenya, talk and integrate it with people in Ethiopia, with people in South Sudan with people in Somalia, because that's really important is this life learning lesson. People know what their healing means. And when they talk about it with each other, they get even more ideas. These are then the various adaptations. We have South Sudan, which is the latest one we worked on two in Kenya, so one with communities in Kenya, and one with the Kenyan police. We've done this for Ethiopia, and Somalia. And now we're doing a third one for Kenya for Kenyan young people for 10 to 24 year olds. All of these have

their own name. They have their own logos. They have their own identity and the Kamakura, which is the Kenyan one. There was once a violent extremist workshop in Mombasa. And we had done a lot of work in communities in Mombasa, with lots of young people. And my friend came back and she said, Angie, I really wish I couldn't figure it out. But it seemed like everybody at this, you know, large regional workshop, all the buses were from this organization called coma cuccia. And I laughed, and I said, there is no organization come across. But they were all a part of this local healing process. And when they introduced themselves, they didn't say what organization or where they came from, they kept saying, We're from Puma cuccia, they make their own t shirts, they, you know, they start to really take on, what is this healing identity? Okay, the young man outside my door is here with his big speakers, but I think it's okay, now. He's turning them off. Let me just, I want to show a little short video about our adaptation process. And this was from the South Sudan process that we've just done.

### **Video**

single eye catching, Dominica, boom, Chicka, Chicka, Chicka, boom, boom, Chicka, boom, Chicka, Chicka, Chicka, Chicka, ching, ching, ching, boom, boom, boom. You're dead. All humans are healers. We are not created to be violent and to create distractions, that our traditions as African people, indicate very clearly that we've always been able to support ourselves in moments of difficulty for us to him. And that, how can this process of adapting this curriculum, speak to the healer within us? How can we activate the healer in each and every individual in a BA.

And that's why you've seen a lot of storytelling and singing and discussions, that group does care. And we shall be taking the stories and the images. And those stories are the images as a methodology help us to heal and to break the cycles of violence. And so the adaptation entails translating the concepts into fast their mother tongue dinga, next to Arabic, we are because most of the people they are going to you who are going to use the material will hate us speak deca, or perhaps. So it's about understanding, giving the meaning.

When you talk about trauma, when you talk about forgiveness, when you talk about reconciliation, what does it mean, according to their tradition, according to their culture? How are they going to create space? And we do it practically by them? You realize we've been sitting in circles, that is what we call a safe space? How are they willing to create space? How would they hold the space and how would they transform the space? Here, it is important to connect the material in the context of a BA, it is just because like especially the paintings that we talk about the paintings, like if you paint the East which day in a BA people would know. Then they'll also see themselves in the pictures. Yeah, they'll see themselves in the pictures and all the stories that are there, anyone can understand it easily. That is why it is good to connect it with the context of OBS because it is reflect like the culture in our pa and it is very unique a little bit under stress when you a BA is also somewhat unique. In fact, visual art in different forms is a very strong tool of communication. So when we use art or drawings or painting to communicate with people. This means we are very sure that the message will successfully flow and marriage. This program will not only benefit a BA This is a program that I see The vibrations going throughout South Sudan. The reason being when you have a people who aspire to leave an

important legacy for the next generation, I see this adaptation process contributing significantly to those conversations. And I believe on a personal note that maybe it will not happen during my lifetime. But I do know they are coming, we are setting the foundation, we are like that. Woman who plants a tree, a mango tree, knowing very well that she will never be alive to eat from the fruits of that tree, that she stopped planting it. No, she plants it, because she believes that another generation will sit on it and will enjoy those foods. That's what we are doing.

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

And that was Babu, I ended up one of our very, very, you can see you can hear his wisdom. And this was a workshop that we did in February 2020 to develop South Sudanese programming. And the things that we've learned is that the name and logo is very important. adapting the cycle of violence, use of language, working with artists and how to show all parts of our lives. And both the negative and the positive. communities and in conflict and violence.

Often only see images of themselves from journalists and photographers who show the negative. People very rarely see the positive. And so yes, we're showing the pain. But we're also very conscious to show that breaking out that breaking free, that healing, and that healing and breaking free happens every day, it's not something that we're still looking for in the future, it's already also happening. So as the bad happens, the good is also there. And so the name and the logo creation, this is just from the last one.

So from Pooja class, we brought in our artists, we have a lot of young people who are here brainstorming members, they were brainstorming and talking about waterfalls coming out of tall skyscrapers, our young artists guy just got up and said I don't talk very much, but I draw. So he turned his little whiteboard. And he sketched and you'll see his sketching to them. The first one where he came out and said, This is what I see, I see cool my co chair behind, which comes from our first kind of program at the community level. But we want to work with the total, the watoto, which are the children, the vidhana, which are the teams and the young adults, which are there and all three of them now come into this image. And then he kept working on it, people kept coming and we kept talking and piecing it together. We talked about how this program is about developing connections, for healing and for hope. And then we really said okay, this is our tagline. And we recreated this now collectively. And this time because of COVID. We were in two different rooms. We were in Nairobi and in quality at the beach at the coast. And we had to actually find ways to get both groups to say, hey, exactly, this is what we're thinking about the creation of the name as we do. This always comes out. And when people walk out of there, they say, Hey, this is ours. This is our name. We spend a lot of time adapting the cycle of violence. It was originally adopted from Olga. By turaco by Dre, I will slaughter her Russian last name, sorry. And we've now adapted it, I think about six or seven times to say what does it mean to hurt yourself? What does it mean to hurt others? How do we break out of that? What is it with truth and forgiveness and justice, peace reconciliation, and as we do that, we do a lot of brainstorming and prioritizing and group work. We end up with a lesson or two. Well up here at the hurting south. And from there, we develop. For each one of these, we develop their own definition. So what does it mean to be an anger and rage. And then we develop a story, where it's actually happened where anger and rage has come out. And from there was stories of

definition to go to the artists who've been now paid for pictures. And that's done for the hurting of others, and also for this hurting itself. And like I said, these paintings now come into little flashcards that you saw Missouri as video, where she's now showing you we use those paintings for the storytelling that happens now at the community level. The use of language, we heal in our tongue, heal in our mother tongue. An authentic oftentimes, as NGOs, we come in, in English. And people just develop a lexicon that mimics our own language. So when we heal in our mother tongue, we have to have our mother tongue explained, but we don't in Africa, at least read and write in our mother tongue very often are not very good. But we use it and we hear it all the time. So the resource facilitators will be giving their groups in Dinka new air in Swahili, but they won't know how to read it. So what we've done is on the front of our of our community flip chart, so it's a it's a flip chart that's about this size, on the backside, or now, this one, it's a mnemonic, because this is in Ethiopia, but on the front side, we'll have it in new air. So we're really trying to find the best way to give the language has been using spoken Li to be given common terms, so that the groups that are doing the start to now have the common terms in their own mother language, tongue so that they can actually talk about these things together. What are facilitators can read and write it in the language that they studied in school. And these are the histories of colonialism. We celebrate our artists, we use watercolors, all my artists are now graphic designers on top of it, and that lets us use the computer and I say no, use pen, paper, water paints, because those paints have a different emotion have a different thing that they bring out. And they int so they help us be able to interpret then the computer graphics, which are lovely for certain times. But we've really stuck to having watercolors because we feel that the water somehow also helps express the emotions of that painting. But involving these artists in our workshops are really key. It's also key to work with women artists, so that we get women's perspectives. And then South Sudan five years ago, when I did this, there were no women artists. And I challenged James were the key, the main artists, Why are there no women? Why are there no women to tell the stories. And five years later, he had actually trained two women who are not the quality that he said, I want them to be a part of our team. So this last time, we had five artists and two of them were women. And it's really critical because we need to have women's perspectives as a part of even the image creation. We have negative stories. And these are sometimes really painful. But the participants have said we want these as a part of the whole story. Because they're a part of our truth telling process. And the healing isn't as rich if we don't tell our truth. We do some things with the negative stories. So the negative stories you can't really see the ethnicity the what subtract what, what, what will take tribes in South Sudan, you can see that on the positive stories, but on the negative stories, try to stay away from that. They're uncomfortable images. They're harsh. They show the realities of people's lived experience. They know that such images for them are not necessarily re-traumatizing because this is what they've lived. And what they say is if we don't have it feels like we're taking out a part of their history, people from kind of Western psychology will say, Oh, you shouldn't have some of these harsh pictures to see over traumatized people. But over and over communities have said, we want to tell this part of the story don't stop us from telling the story. And they've insisted on it. And I think hearing that's a really important thing. And not necessarily hearing this idea that Westerners will often come in and say, well, that will hurt them, they can't see that is actually sometimes more hurting. Most images that people see and internalize today, for example, in Somalia, where these pictures come from the newspaper in the

media, there's very few positive images. Almost everything that people see about themselves in their context is about violence, destruction, pain, them being bad people, terrorists. And so the healthy practices of everyday life is often not shown or seen. And these images do that they're part of that strength based healing centered approach. It also shows that there are many things people do every day that supports their emotional and mental health. So because of COVID, we've actually developed this whole new little piece of virtual peer support, like I talked about earlier. And we've started to put things on videos, short videos, three to five minutes. Like the little waving palm tree is just one of many things. But now we've actually started our virtual peer support groups on on what's up of having 14 folks with two facilitators who send out those videos in the course of the week, leave conversation in the course of the week, and hold healing circles online, once a week. And so we hope to actually integrate this new way we're doing this into a new Somali FinTech application that's coming out this year. I'm just going to show one little quick thing of how we do the digital and then I'm almost done. I have one more slide after this and then we'll get into questions.

## **Video**

Trigger reminds our bodies of previous situations of feelings. That can be many types of triggers, such as sounds, sights, smells, and emotions. A trigger can be positive or negative. When we use our senses, our brain receives information and assigns meaning to that information. If it is a positive trigger, our bodies are reminded of good feelings and events. For instance, maybe the smell of a particular cake reminds you of your favorite grandmother. with trauma, there can be many negative triggers. They cause the survival brain to take over in response to a real or perceived threat. By understanding this phenomenon, people who experienced triggers will be able to better distinguish between real and perceived threats, and respond accordingly. Almost anything can be a trigger. Can we're not always aware of what acts as a trigger for us. The smell of the cake may positively remind you of your loved grandmother. But it may also remind you of the feelings of loss and grief. If your grandmother has passed away, or if after her death, you do not have anyone to take care of you. By understanding the concept of a trigger, we can become more aware of how trauma and compounded stress may be affecting each of us in our daily lives. Sometimes it is hard to identify what triggers us. When someone experiences a negative trigger, his or her thinking brain often shuts down and the survival brain is activated. We can work to keep our thinking brain turned on so that we can make a decision to respond appropriately. We can do this by strengthening our ability to manage our thinking and survivor brains. This is very similar to how we train our bodies. We can also train our thinking brain by paying attention to our feelings. The brain can fool you into seeing what you wish to see by filling in the missing gaps of information, and so give you a false alarm. Trauma impacts the brain when it is triggered to give you a false alarm and the brain fills in the gap. When you have been attacked by a dog in the past, seeing another dog can trigger you into thinking that you are in danger. And you feel afraid. When the dog senses that and smells your adrenalin, it will react, that's fulfilling your fears. If the thinking brain is shut down, the survival brain cannot distinguish between real and perceived threat. The survival brain will have many false alarms, it will act as if any perceived threat is real. When we experience a false alarm, it not only affects us, but also those around us.

**Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

So just in conclusion, for work that we do at GSN, we focus on being able to help support that adaptation process. We do a lot of workshops and trainings, we work with communities and organizations, we do coaching. But we're also helping hold these virtual circles, as well as the physical circles where we have funding to do that. So this is a lot of what GSN is doing. It's about supporting emotional health, well being healing and resilience. And that is it. Thank you so much for listening.

**Man 1**

So first of all, the wonderful work you do is very moving, and so powerful. I'm sure I can speak for everyone saying thank you for all that you do. It's phenomenal. One of the questions I had was how did you settle upon using the kind of watercolor as your basis for a lot of the storytelling through telling, as I saw in the videos, someone's using a piece of string and had the stones and the flowers. So what kind of led you to the water cooler in the first place?

**Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

So we do use the string and the stone, like we use a lot of embodied pieces, we're always touching things. The watercolor, I think, was the first artist that I started working with, and that was his preferred method. And that's where we've kind of set that's where we've just he was a Somali artist who had been trained in propaganda, you know, illustrations by Sia Berry, by the North Koreans, you know, like, really interesting fellow. But he really insisted and said, Don't let people go to graphics, keep this pin, because the water tells us something. And I actually don't believe that and have to go and convince artists why we need to actually do real, real paintings and not the graphic design.

**Man 1**

Thank you very much.

**Woman 1**

I have a question. And thank you so much. This has been incredibly impactful. I work with a lot of immigrants in New York. And I was so grateful for your opening slide, which was your trigger warning. And then your trigger video at the end. And it made me curious in terms of say in your healing circles, what support you have, because I'm a theater teaching artist. And I always feel like I've got to be a psychologist and a psychiatrist too. And I do have students with very different kinds of trauma depending on where they came from, and their reasons for coming here. So if you could just speak to the support structure you have.

**Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

So our main support structure is that the people who lead these groups are volunteers at the community level. But they get together as they're doing this. And they'll have a debriefing every week, and there'll be somebody who will help lead that debriefing. There's different referral pathways that we have in different places, it's better than others. Somalia has limited referral pathways. Kenya is better. So it depends also where we are. But even everywhere, where we go, we develop some kind of referral pathway. So in Somalia, it might be the mom that we then

make sure comes to our training. It might be the old woman who sells at this shop who everybody knows she's somebody of wisdom. So there's always people in every society that people know are wise and holding space.

And if you can find out who they are, you can put them in your pathways, you can bring them into the programs as the facilitators. And you know, for centuries, people have held space for each other. And it's only in the last 100 years that we said oh we have to have experts who can do that. And there is never ever and I've become a little psychologists in my own way, but I'm not. I'm a peacebuilding practitioner, but we work with a critical psychologist. And there's never going to be enough money and resources for professionalized mental health care in the world, let alone in conflict zones. And in limited resource settings, in, in places like even Kenya broken down systems where Kenya is I got enough resources if they really wanted to, maybe they could. And then there are people like my husband, who will be like, that's not for me, that's not my culture, you know. So we have to have other ways of doing this. And because mental health is now so tied, and it's getting less so. So in North America, and Europe and Australia, it's becoming less tied to these institutions. It's still there, though pharmacy is there that psychiatry is there. But it's much less in Kenya, though. We've taken all that Western learning, and that's all we have. And so if you don't have that, you have nothing. And we keep, we're actually challenging that and saying, we have to have other things.

### **Bonface Beti**

And we are looking at what are the present resilient sources of resilience? And how are people been resilient? What are those points? How can we leverage on that? How can we build, for example, on the fact that people get a lot of asset and support from relationships? So there's a lot of reclaiming of this kind of connecting and healing, that is kind of not just a kind of biomedical but also like, what is the lived experience? What are the contextual resilience points of resilience is that you can tap into,

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

And it's exactly what Wendy's just said, this is a part of that decolonizing the knowledge and the practice. And I believe that New York has a lot to learn from us. I believe that North America has a lot to learn from what we're learning here. And so that's why we're always really happy to share this work. Other questions I'm trying to see here it I was unable to look in the chat while I was presenting. If there's any questions here that I'm not seeing, or if there's anyone else who'd like to tie see somebody in a red shirt, can't see her at the dinner. Hi,

### **Woman 2**

I'm in Chicago, I've worked a lot in Africa and in El Salvador. And I just want to emphasize the importance of working people working in their own language. I always work with a translator, because I don't assume that everyone would be speaking English. And that was one point. The other point that I wanted to make was what Jeff said like handy. handwork helps to express emotions. I think that channeling the human artist in people is also the way to engage in this sort of projections dialogue, that you can create scene scene work through puppetry, and then have

like a perspective on your, on your work on or on your story. And you can engage you know, this, this art form is also has been, and I have used it, it's very powerful.

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

So Jeff, you've just asked a question about the difference between use of art images and engaging people as makers themselves. We went to the artwork in particularly in Somalia, where most of the women we were working with were really illiterate and had never even picked up a pen hardly. So it was really hard. Like, there's different places where even to say, well, let's do the creative artwork. In Kenya, it's very easy because everybody's gone through the education system, people have held a color before they've had paint at least. And there are places where because of the conflict, they've never had it and giving people some access to that is usually a very creative thing. But they want it to look really nice and neat. And what we're always trying to say is you can do what you want to do with it. We've not done as much kind of the art therapy piece of it as we start to do the youth work with 10 to 17 year olds. So our What touches on vaginas? We're definitely going in here in Kenya, because it's actually something they know how to do. We're definitely going to bring that into them and allow them to do that for that kind of expression.

### **Bonface Beti**

Yeah, like they're people actually, like they have. They're using theatre again. Yeah, they are using a lot of these resources singing, actually, like spoken word artists. So they are part of this movement, that social movement that we created, especially the young people right now. And it's really like gaining a lot of traction in the communities.

### **Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

Yeah, yeah. And so in these groups, the string the storytelling, yeah, it becomes the singing, you know, these embodied practices that they now start to bring into it. It's designed usually from them one or two, we give offers of saying, hey, you could do this, by the end, they have all their new different like, practices that they're using or bringing back.

### **Bonface Beti**

For instance, the social dance, you know, the dance of the palm tree came from them. And also like what Bob was talking about, like Singler catching, aloka, boom, boom, boom, all these kind of intentional games, I used to work on embodiment, and bringing people in the here and now and working deeply on things. Yeah. Comments, comments, common? Hel

### **Woman 3**

Hello, I would like to share a practice that they have in Japan, but I know through a project in Colombia, that makes me think a lot about what you're doing that Congratulations, because I find it wonderful. And this is this practice is called as kintsugi. I don't know if I'm pronouncing it properly. But it's when a ceramic is broken, you can fix it again, with silver or with gold. And it gives you not only the peace again, but what happened in your life as a recognition. So these, these scars, and these pains are also part of where I am today. And I, what I think that art gives is perspective. Now for a moment, you can put it outside it's an image is art. And it's critical

thinking. But of course, when you do it yourself, you're all also involved in a process of looking at yourself to take it out through art. So I think it's one wonderful project. One you're doing that. It has so many perspectives and possibilities. So that is very rich in its offer. Thank you very much. Thank you. Okay.

**Woman 4**

I want to say thank you so much. I've really enjoyed that presentation at the office. And yeah, it's really good. Actually, I feel like coming back and being part of that coming back from us. Yeah, thank you so much. It's especially so beautiful to see how you have made it so culturally relevant. And I loved your the way you talked about core design and core development, that you're developing all this together with the communities. So that's really, really great. And my question is very simple. How can we partner with you how you've talked about and Yeah, you've talked about partnering internationally. And I'm just wondering, what kind of partnerships are you envisioning with a group like this and how can we work together?

**Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

We can co design anything.

**Bonface Beti**

Especially because so most of you, I know come in, and even my friend Emily's that I saw. So when I went to school, in Winnipeg, one of the coldest cities in North America, to do in graduate school to do my Peace and Conflict Studies, and I spent a lot of time working new karma young people. in Winnipeg, new karma youth, most of them actually lived in Nairobi before they came to Canada. And one of the things I have been telling IGN, I've always thought about is how can these work also partner with those kinds of new karma groups in the new place? Especially because adaptation process is really something that can really bring out some of those things that many programs probably might not be able to bring out. So that is one of the potential areas for newcomer groups in these places.

**Dr. Angi Yodi-Maina**

And you do a lot of work one job with those new covers. You come to us for a few days. Yes, yeah. Although

**Madeleine McGirk**

I hate to be the one to interrupt, because that time is now wrapping up, I want to stay for another hour and a half. I feel like we have three minutes left, so Bonface and Angie, I don't know if there are any parting words or any last things you want to leave with people before everyone inevitably goes off to other zoom meetings or weekends, or is there anything you want to leave us with?

**Bonface Beti**

In terms of partnership, these work is multi art work. So it can work brings together theater, it brings together watercolour painting, it brings together thing, everything. So in terms of partnering, this is the kind of work that brings a multi arts approach to healing,

**Madeleine McGirk**

I'm gonna be thinking about this for weeks. So and then I'm glad that you have your permission to share your email address, because I'm sure partnership requests and questions will come in. So thank you for offering that generously. That's really kind. And I also want to thank you for doing this for us and for sharing this with our community. Because I think the ripple effects of sharing this kind of work are huge. And I'm really, really grateful that you took the time to talk about what you're doing with us. And I really can't thank you enough. So, and thank you all for attending. And I know it's Friday night for some of us that Tuesday morning maybe and I just want to acknowledge that you've given up time to come and share this with us. So thank you very much. Feel free to email me if you have any questions or follow up thoughts or readings you think should be linked when we post this as a learning module online. And please join us every month for our Think Tank series. They are hosted by wonderful teaching artists from all over the world who are so in need and hungry for support and for partnerships. So please do come along host one yourself if you have something you'd like to talk about. And please stay connected to what we're doing. So with that being said, Thank you very very much and I look forward to seeing you all soon.