Through its Umoja Project (“unity” in Kiswahili) the Global Interfaith Partnership assists children living in vulnerable households by providing support for education, food security, basic personal care and household needs, as well as emotional and spiritual support. While recognizing the immense need for immediate relief services, the Umoja Project is committed equally to the slower process of increasing the capacity of individual households and the local community to meet their own needs long-term. To that end, in our five years of service, our efforts have focused upon:

1. *Building the long-term capacity of the community to care for children by fostering a network of congregations, schools, household guardians through which needs are identified and solutions coordinated.* These institutional leaders had no history of working together on social issues such as orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), but have responded eagerly to this opportunity. Since the Project was initiated in 2007, 18 primary schools and a dozen secondary schools have designated a staff person to be the “Umoja Project link teacher” who works with the Project. Over 20 congregations are working with Umoja to identify children from within their congregations; and 10 representatives from congregations as well as other faith-based or community service organizations are meeting regularly to prioritize needs and approve service decisions.
2. *Building a network of support groups for the children’s guardians*. The children’s guardians from each partnering school establish a “self-help group” as the vehicle through which Umoja makes an initial assessment of household needs. In addition, the guardians offer mutual aid, participate in Umoja Project program decisions, and insure accountability from program participants.
3. *Providing the support necessary to keep children enrolled in school, including*:
   1. Providing uniforms, school supplies and exam fees for 600 primary school students.
   2. Providing tuition, uniforms, and school supplies for over 125 secondary school students.
   3. Initiating school-based food security programs which ensure that children have at least one nutritious meal each day (teachers identified hunger as the primary need affecting school attendance and academic performance). Currently 18 primary schools are providing a daily lunch to over 3300 students.
   4. Providing sanitary towels for 500 adolescent girls, allowing them to attend school regularly. Statistics show that girls miss over 6 weeks of school each year without necessary supplies, making them fall behind in their academic performance or drop out of school altogether.
   5. Providing psychosocial support for secondary school students.
   6. Providing evening and weekend food and other necessities for over 80 households in which children as young as 13 are heads of households for themselves and younger siblings.
4. *Responding to the particular needs of adolescent girls, by*:
   1. Hosting regular educational programs that focus on health, relationships, life skills, and girls’ rights;
   2. Offering guidance and support through female mentors; and
   3. Inspiring and giving direction through interaction with local women professionals.
5. *Providing relief services which respond to basic needs (e.g., blankets, home repair and new construction)*. While the focus of these services is to respond to urgent needs, households also benefit from the Umoja Project by employing guardians whenever possible (e.g. as tailors for the uniforms or as laborers for home repairs and construction).
6. *Promoting sustainable development through employment and other income generating projects for household guardians*. Currently we are focusing on the development of school-based income-generating projects which will allow schools to assume an increasing portion of the costs for the lunch program.