

**PREVENTION AND REINTEGRATION OF FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS IN
NORTHERN UGANDA PROJECT**

Forgiveness and Reconciliation Workshop 3 and 4 Report

The ESPERE Methodology

Joint Partnership between Goldin Institute and Arigatou International Nairobi

May 13, 2015

Table of Contents

1.0 Workshops' overview.....	2
2.0 Workshop 3: Workshop for secondary school teachers.....	2
2.1 Workshop Proceedings	3
2.2 Forgiveness Phase.....	3
2.3. Reconciliation Phase	9
3.0 ESPERE Workshop 4 Report: Workshop with former child soldiers and child mothers.....	12
3.1 Introduction.....	12
3.2 Workshop Proceedings: Modules covered.....	13
4.0 Successes of the workshops.....	14
5.0 Challenges	18
6.0 Recommendations	19
7.0 Conclusion	19
Appendix: List of Participants.....	20
A. Workshop for Secondary school teachers	20
B. Workshop for former child soldiers and child mothers.....	21

1.0 Workshops' overview

Four forgiveness and reconciliation workshops using the ESPERE Methodology were planned for in the project. This report highlights activities of workshop 3 and 4 which took place between February and March 2015 in the Districts of Kitgum and Amuru.

2.0 Workshop 3: Workshop for secondary school teachers

Introduction:

This workshop took place in Kitgum District. The district was one of the most affected in Northern Uganda by armed violence and conflict. The instability resulted in conscription and coercions of countless adults and children into rebel ranks. Each and every household in Northern Uganda has at least suffered the effects of the conflict in terms of abduction, death, displacement, poverty, sicknesses and desertion.

The search for peace continues amidst lack of protection for children, scant food and dismal humanitarian conditions. Our learning institution enrolls different categories of learners including former child soldiers, young mothers, child-headed households and orphans. Such categories need special attention in order to successfully be reintegrated into their communities and have access to basic services.

In light of the above, Trainers equipped with skills and knowledge of the ESPERE Methodology facilitated a workshop that trained secondary and vocational school teachers to equip them with knowledge and skills on the process of forgiveness and reconciliation in order for them to effectively respond to needs of affected learners in their schools.

The third workshop was conducted at YY Okot Memorial College between 6th and 12th of February, 2015. The facilitators were; Omona Boniface, Ajok Dorah, and Okello Kennedy.



2.1 Workshop Proceedings

2.2 Forgiveness Phase

During the opening of the workshop, the administrator of YY Okot Memorial College Mr. Ocan Jolly appreciated the organizer for choosing their school as venue for the ESPERE program which directly benefited four (4) of their teachers who are members of the school disciplinary committee. He further noted that the ESPERE program would not only enable teachers to work with the former child soldiers but also the broader school community and in some cases family settings. Mr. Lokwiya Francis (*Coordinator ARLPI*) stressed the need for ESPERE movement to extend and cover the whole of Northern Uganda to teach people the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict and promote peaceful coexistence within communities.

Introduction to Module 1: I participate in the birth of ESPERE

While introducing the ESPERE model, participants were taken through a simple exercise of the cob web to enable them get to know one another since they came from different schools. This exercise enabled them to easily form the Grupinos (Smaller Group) and participate at the plenary later.

A play, “**the leader gets angry**”, provided an opportunity for participants to assess their emotions when reacting to conflicts. Participants analyzed the various ways that people reacted and proposed positive ways to respond when faced with conflicts.





Module 2: From Darkness to light

This module enabled participants through play, exercises and readings to recognize the effects of aggression on emotions, thoughts and behavior and the consequences of rage and pain on physical and emotional health. After participating in the reading and story of “**Lius the Invisible Rabid**”, participants were able to reflect on their personal case in relation to the kind of behavior to display when faced with rage. Practically through illustration of the burning matches, participants learnt about the difficulty of managing emotions and their consequences in our daily relationships and the false "benefits" that one gets in holding on to the anger. The commitment using the candle light provided a clear symbol of moving from darkness to light in relation to an offense. One participant raised concern about the category of husbands who remain quiet and silent when offended, wondering whether it could be a way of managing rage or it's a way of showing violence.



Module 3: I decide to forgive

While introducing the module and presenting the **decision to forgive** as the best alternative to overcome resentment and hatred, participants were presented with bags of different colors containing different items of different sizes and colors. With reasons each chose a bag. It became much easier for the participants to reflect on the different forms of attitudes in resolving conflicts including; becoming angrier, an eye for an eye, legalist, passivity and reconciliation. Much as participants appreciated conciliatory position, it was not lost to them that many circumstances in African settings reflected “**an eye for an eye**” approach which one participant, basing on his personal experience reported to have worsened the situation, hence makes people to continue living in conflict.

Upon the reading on Forgiveness as the key to peace of mind, participants realized they have the opportunity all the time to go back and choose forgiveness.



Facilitator and participant as they make commitment on choosing forgiveness as a conciliatory option to conflict resolution

Module 4: I see with new eyes

In an attempt to promote the concept of compassion and empathy with the offender, a number of exercises were done in order to arouse views and perspectives from participants in relation to people and offenses. This helped participants to gain knowledge about the need to always have a critical mind

about people and offenses; and unmask the true nature and understand the circumstances of the offender.



Kennedy (bottom, right) due to his religious affiliation was never comfortable participating in the rituals during the first training of TOTs with Lissette but gained confidence after realizing the purpose of the rituals; he led the participants successfully during his session while facilitating this module

Module 5: I understand my offender

This module aimed to expand participants' understanding on the concept of compassion and actions of the aggressor. During the session discussions on whether or not to forgive, Dominic Ongwen the former top commander of LRA who surrendered to the Ugandan authorities recently generated lots of diverse opinion. Several participants felt it would be difficult to forgive Dominic Ongwen noting

he had opportunities to escape earlier. Some countered saying his circumstances may have made it impossible for him to escape then.



Participants molding images of their offender

As participants were subjected to exercises and plays under this module, some realized the need to understand why the offender could have done the offense. This was illustrated during the drama of the chances of survival on the Gilligan's Island as in the pictures below.



Below are pictures of participants as they appreciate and commit to promote the positive attributes of their offenders by painting the molds using green paint.



Module 6: Breaking the chain and washing away the pain

An activity was performed to illustrate a break from the past described as *breaking the chain and washing away the pain*. See the pictures below.



On commitment to forgiveness, one of the participants who had been holding in her heart her niece whom she had supported from childhood but turned against her, being the case she was working on in the process of forgiveness, she realized holding her in her heart was tying her from many things and she decided to release herself from the chain and washed away the pain, she could not avoid shading tears during this session after realizing how the anger was tying her from many things.

2.3. Reconciliation Phase

Participants were made to understand that true reconciliation was based on setting clear principles and values that needed protection and care from both the offended and the offender. Breaking of the principles and values would result in instability and hence conflict.

Module 7: Building foundation for truth and principles



Above are pictures of participants as they made commitments to promote some of the principles and values they identified that would govern their daily actions in the process of reconciliation. By cutting some of the threads, they noticed how weak the group, an institution or household would become when some principles are broken. The need to never give up in trying to restore broken principles and values was however emphasized.

Module 8: Caring and Protecting



Above are photos of participants writing on their 'balloon of life' the qualities that needed to be cared for, and protected. This was followed by a play that involved protecting ones balloon while trying to destroy those of others. One of the participants during this play of caring and protecting never accepted to play with his balloon claiming he didn't feel how it was to care and protect the life of others.

Module 9: Rebuilding and restoring

During this module, participants learnt about the different kinds of relationships (coexistence, cohabiting or communion) that can be re-established in the restoration of principles during the process of reconciliation which they had never considered as being genuine in the process of reconciliation. The pictures below show participants illustrating their opinions through painting about the importance of the Principles in the human interaction as they make commitment to remember and promote principles as a foundation of ethics and moral of social exchanges.



The facilitator however broke the decorated pot to create a scenario of team work and illustrate the need to respect others opinion by restoring the broken pieces again.



Being teachers from different schools, they realized the importance of promoting restorative justice especially when working with learners (students) who might at one time violate and break the school principles.

Some participants wondered why “**apology**” was never emphasized on in the process of forgiveness but instead in the process of reconciliation. They were able to learn that forgiveness can be done without the offender necessarily apologizing to the offended but apologizing is just another way of restoration in the process of reconciliation

Module 10: Dialogue and reconciliation Pact

This module enabled participants recognize and accept the role of making pacts in the process of reconciliation. Pacts is a chance to talk about the principles that guide human relationships and to identify some form of pact that could possibly be established with one’s offender.



Participants making commitment according to their choice of relationship (coexistence, cohabiting or communion)

Module 11: Memory and celebration



In this model, it came to light that people in Kitgum mostly concentrate in celebrating heroes through memory in recognition of their good work to promote their good life practices.

The current generation has limited opportunities to interact with the cultural leaders to discuss how best to celebrate reconciliation according to the cultural setting. The cultural way of celebrating reconciliation provides opportunity for the victim and the offender to reflect on the principles broken and to set some agreement to re-establish a new relationship.

Fr. Anthony Nyeko closed the workshop. He deeply appreciated the knowledge that came with the ESPERE program. He however had strong desire for the program to be extended to cover the broader population so as to support the religious institutions in preaching the gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation.



Above is a picture of Fr. Anthony Parish Priest of Kitgum Mission and on the right are participants as they posed for group photo

3.0 ESPERE Workshop 4 Report: Workshop with former child soldiers and child mothers

3.1 Introduction

Pabbo is one of the Sub Counties in Amuru District that is located approximately 42 kilometres by road, north of Gulu. During the LRA War (1986 - 2006), Pabbo was one of the first and largest camps for the Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Since the cessation of hostilities in 2006, the IDPs have returned to their villages. Returnees, child mothers, victims of LRA atrocities and children born from captivity are flooded in many parts of the Sub County. In light of the above, it was seen necessary to conduct the last workshop of the pilot phase with the former child soldiers, child mothers, some victims and opinion leaders/elders of Pabbo Sub County.

The workshop was conducted from Monday 9th to Monday 16th of March 2015 at Pabbo Catholic Parish Hall. The workshop consisted of 4 males and 11 females making a total of 15 participants. The 3 facilitators to this workshop were (Okello Charles, Anena Lily Odankara and Omony Geoffrey -all former child soldiers. The facilitators were very inspiring in that they were never afraid to share their experiences to the participants.



3.2 Workshop 4 Proceedings: Modules covered

During the 7 days' workshop, all the eleven (11) modules were successfully covered;

Modules under Forgiveness Phase

1. I participate in the birth of ESPERE
2. From darkness to light
3. I decide to forgive
4. I see with new eyes, I change perspective
5. I understand my offender
6. I break chain and wash away the pain

Modules under Reconciliation Phase

7. Building foundations for principles
8. Caring and protecting.
9. Rebuilding and restoring.
10. Dialogue and reconciliation pact
11. Memories and celebration

4.0 Successes of the workshop

Many achievements were made through the workshop that will impact both individual and the larger community as illustrated by the narrations below. Very important to note also is that during the workshop, none of the participants faced fear participating in the rituals as they made commitment to life according to the themes.

The woman in the picture is a widow who lost her husband in a brutal and very painful killing. Her husband had been a political leader in the community. One night a group of unknown thugs attacked their home and it seemed it was a planned move to kill her husband. She ran to seek for help from the security personnel but all had gone for their night duties. The neighbors were all frightened and afraid to rescue the situation. Upon returning to the house with some elders, she found her husband lying dead on the floor. Instead of her relatives having feelings of compassion and the heart to counsel her, she was surprised that the relatives were accusing her of conspiring with the killers. During the course of the investigation, some suspects who appeared before the court testified of being hired to conduct the murder. During the ESPERE workshop, she realized she would gain nothing by holding on to anger towards her accusers. She chose forgiveness remarking, *“In my heart, I have in good faith forgiven everyone for the sake of peace and betterment of our community”*



The woman in the picture besides had been in conflict with her co-wife for 3 years. Upon completing module 4 (I see with new eyes), the exercise of the mask and the mirror provided her with an opportunity of reflection and explanation to what she was going through. She realized she would have a gloomy face whenever she saw her offender (co-wife). The conflict had separated them such that they wouldn't see eye to eye including refusal to share same water point/source. Before completing the forgiveness phase, she had the courage to approach her offender (co-wife) to ask for forgiveness where she had gone wrong and to also let her know she had forgiven her for whatever that happened. She made this remark during the workshop:

“This workshop is bringing out a reflection in my case of my offender, first thing I will do tomorrow morning is to approach and let her know I have forgiven her to enable us start a new life”



The woman in the picture is among the village health team of Pabbo Sub County and she offers guidance and counseling services, she found this workshop very resourceful in her area of community service. Just after module 2 (I go from darkness to light), she had been able to guide one of her friends in conflict out of the darkness to light by applying the knowledge she acquired from the workshop. After intervening, the two parties were able to restore back their relationship.

Below are pictures taken during activity and commitment' sessions:







5.0 Challenges

- Some of the women including one of the facilitators had small children. We could not avoid interference from their children during the workshop.
- At Pabbo Sub County in Amuru District, no hotel was willing to provide meals for the workshop at the rate we offered. We had to compromise on the quality and quantity of meals.
- Due to large number of participants that turned up the first day during the fourth workshop, some participants missed the writing materials since we had only planned for 15 participants.
- The budget did not cover accommodation for the ESPERE Coordinator outside his home District and had to travel daily to the venue with exposure to adverse weather condition and delays in getting to the venue on time.
- Sharing cups for drinking water made a lot of people to contract flu from others especially during the last/fourth workshop.

6.0 Recommendations

- Some consideration should be made to cater for those women with children i.e. support a child caretaker
- Budget for meals needs to be revised
- Accommodation for facilitators should be included in the budget

7.0 Conclusion

In general, the local leaders/authorities including the religious leaders gave maximum support towards the program and requested for its continuation in order to cause change within the community and to relieve religious leaders of their workload towards reconciling communities.

Appendix: List of Participants

A. Workshop for Secondary school teachers

Date: 06th February -12th February 2015.

Location: YY Okot Memorial College Kitgum District

LIST OF TRAINERS				
S/NO	NAMES	TITLE/POSITION/ORGANIZATION	DISTRICT	CONTACT
01	Okello Kennedy	Teacher Patongo Secondary School	Agago	0777686593
02	Ajok Dorah	Teacher YY Okot Memorial College	Kitgum	0772977816
03	Omona Boniface	Teacher Kitgum Mixed Secondary School	Kitgum	0782987756
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS				
S/NO	NAMES	TITLE/POSITION/ORGANIZATION	DISTRICT	CONTACT
01	Odokopira Rashal Obalim	Teacher St. Bakhita Girls Secondary School	Kitgum	0784497174
02	Alwoc Ketty	Teacher St. Bakhita Girls Secondary School	Kitgum	0754073818
03	Odoch Charles	Teacher St. Bakhita Girls Secondary School	Kitgum	0773436917
04	Wokorach Erick	Teacher YY Okot Memorial College	Kitgum	0774958609
05	Acen Sophie	Senior Woman Teacher YY Okot College	Kitgum	0782911416
06	Akemkwene David	Teacher YY Okot Memorial College	Kitgum	0774029135
07	Olweny Francis	Teacher YY Okot Memorial College	Kitgum	0777483906
08	Blue Santino	Teacher YY Okot Memorial College	Kitgum	0777383877
09	Opwonya James	Instructor Kitgum Technical Institute	Kitgum	0777648631
10	Ocitti William	Instructor Kitgum Technical Institute	Kitgum	0777324904
11	Unique Samuel	Teacher Kitgum integrated Secondary School	Kitgum	0777761509
12	Lubangakene Willy	Teacher Kitgum integrated Secondary School	Kitgum	0774969605
13	Otim S.B Richard	Teacher St. Bakhita Girls Secondary School	Kitgum	0774754237
14	Alimo Scovia	Teacher Kitgum Modern Vocational School	Kitgum	0794168066
15	Lawino Jenneth	Teacher Kitgum Modern Vocational School	Kitgum	0773321782

B. Workshop for former child soldiers and child mothers

Date: 09th March -16th March 2015.

Location: Pabbo Sub County Catholic Parish Hall

LIST OF TRAINERS				
S/NO	NAMES	TITLE/POSITION/ORGANIZATION	DISTRICT	CONTACT
01	Anena Lilly Odonkara	Housewife <i>(Formerly Child Soldier)</i>	Amuru	0779026196
02	Omony Geoffrey	C/P Lurem For Progress Youth Association- Gulu Student at Cavendish University <i>(Formerly Child Soldier)</i>	GULU	0773348688
03	Okello Charles	<i>(Former Child Soldier)</i> Student at Nsamizi Institute	Amuru	0773024199
04	Okello Denis Kilama	ESPERE Coordinator	Gulu	0773435637

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS, CHILD MOTHERS, VICTIMS OF LRA ACTIVITY) FOURTH WORKSHOP

S/NO	NAMES	TITLE/POSITION	DISTRICT	CONTACT
01	Opwonya Moses	Student	Amuru	0775487292
02	Abur Evelyn	Housewife	Amuru	
03	Atim Lucy	Farmer	Amuru	0774534888 / 0713628382
04	Oburu Sam Johnson	Student	Amuru	
05	Auma Mary Bongomin	Farmer	Amuru	0753874998
06	Lamunu Lucy	VHT/CVC's/HBC	Amuru	0714104870 / 0782358556
07	Ayot Sophia	House wife	Amuru	
08	Angee Alice	Farmer	Amuru	
09	Ajok Jackline	Farmer	Amuru	
10	Akello Monica	Farmer	Amuru	
11	Acayo Grace	Farmer	Amuru	0754157152
12	Bongomin Oscar	Student	Amuru	0777675522
13	Adoch Nancy	Farmer	Amuru	0779200049 / 0716132496
14	Lamwaka Concy	Farmer	Amuru	
15	Okello Richard	Farmer	Amuru	0772742108 / 0711944344