

Some of the stories of change 2020: **Building peace through young adult peace champions in post-conflict communities – Phase II.**

1. Discrimination on account of rape-The case of Immaculate, Lira District

Immaculate is one of the many children who became orphaned as a result of the LRA war. Their home, located behind the current Barlonyo massacre mass grave site, was attacked in 2004 by the LRA rebels when she was 8 years and both parents were killed. A social worker took her to a shelter home in Lira town where she stayed for 4 years before returning to her grandmother's home. The grandmother took her to one family where she became a helper. The man in the home where she worked as a helper sexually abused her and she became pregnant. The man then chased her out of his home. She decided to return to the shelter home. She later married a man in Aleptong district, Teso region, who later chased her away after hearing rumours that Immaculate had been sexually abused by rebels and that is how she had become pregnant. Her child later died and Immaculate now sales oranges in Lira town to earn a living. *(Unfortunately due to the high number of groups, Immaculate's group was not among those selected to benefit from the project).*

2. Ouma Peter – Kaabong West, Kaabong district:



Ouma peter - front

“I loved the joy of killing, but my worst day was when I was shot and lost one of my testicles. I now have one” - Ouma narrates. He always felt good when he would be welcomed by girls praising him after a successful raid. Ouma was nicknamed Lamanatamoe – meaning one who kills around the gardens and one who even works/kills at night.

He started raiding at around age 12. He started by escorting the raiders by carrying their belongings - mainly out of group influence. Upon return, the raiders could give him one of the raided cows. Later he sold the cows and bought a gun. His initial intention of acquiring a gun was to obtain cows for pride price - more than 100. “But I realized, I was looking for death. Most of my colleagues died”.

After receiving the trainings in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, connectors for peace and trauma healing from the project, Ouma is now one of the youth championing peace in his community in Kaabong district. He has mobilized and lured fellow colleagues through music, dance and drama and door to door sensitizations to join the peace champions group. From champion of violence, he now says he has become a champion of peace in his community.

3. Machar Lokure— Lolelia subcounty, Kaabong



Machar Lokure -front

Lokure was popularly known in his community as Lokomolimoyi /madowadowa – meaning combat. He was a fierce warrior because of his braveness in killing his culprits. He was among a group of 180 warriors. Lokure and his colleagues often raided Turkana (Kenya), Jie and Acholi (both Ugandan communities) and even within Kaabong district. In one attack, they would raid between 100-200 heads of cows. He says he would buy guns from South Sudan. He was motivated by the fact that he and his community had been raided, and lack of what to eat/lack of income. “Sometimes I would divorce some of my women to be able to claim back my dowry/cows to sell and get some money”. [This is contrary to the Ugandan marriage and divorce law that prohibits and outlaws forceful demand for the return of dowry in times of divorce]. Lokure abandoned raiding in 2010 and says he needs support.

Today, Lokure says “after the training I am happier back in the community”. He now assists the police to recover stolen cows. He shares everything he learned with the group which in turn shares with the rest of the community. The Trauma healing training helped me understand that I was traumatized myself” – he adds. He has helped at least 20 former warriors in Loteteleit parish in Kaabong to join the peace champions group.

Elena Service Provider's story (Lira Transit Shelter Group): This group started as a transit center for girls affected by the war. The center provided counselling and basic skills training to girls who were then helped to integrate with the community. We realized later that the counselling we provided was not enough. The trauma experienced during the war affected these girls and women long after they left our shelter and many of them failed to integrate with communities. We realized also that the whole community was traumatized, everybody had been affected by the war in some way or other. After the training with CECORE we started trauma healing within ourselves. We are now reaching out to our community. This area (Ojwina Division) had the highest rate of crime in the division. But now it is one of the most peaceful. We are also using our catering business as a platform to preach to others about peace. As a result, we have been able to form other peace groups in our area. The peace champion group has even started making wine as one of the connectors for peace projects.

Odong: Bar-Lonyo, Lira district: I was abducted when I was a little boy. I became a child soldier. I participated in killing many people, including some of the people I knew. I had to kill in order not to be killed. After my escape from captivity, I was taken to a rehabilitation center but I failed to integrate with others. I would always stay alone thinking about all the people I had killed. The trauma healing and peace building training in I got from CECORE helped me to transform. I was able to come to terms with my past. Now I am able to talk to others and I have been able to help those like me.

Moses Ogwang: Bar-Lonyo – Lira district: I am a former camp leader in the refugee camp at Bar-Lonyo. I survived the massacre of Bar-Lonyo where more than 350 people were brutally killed. Most of the camp leaders were killed that day. I participated in the burial of the dead in mass graves. I was deeply traumatized. For a long time afterwards, I used to wake up screaming from nightmares every night. The training in trauma by CECORE helped him to cope. After the trainings, it helped to train others in the group. I am now helping other community members to resolve family disputes.

Nakiru Flavia (young mother's peace group) - Kaabong: Lived a street life, now a single mother. After becoming a Peace Champion, she settled down, got a loan from the group and is now running her own small business (retail shop). She is able to look after her mother and son. The groups among others makes hydro-form bricks and employs youth who make a living from it as a group.

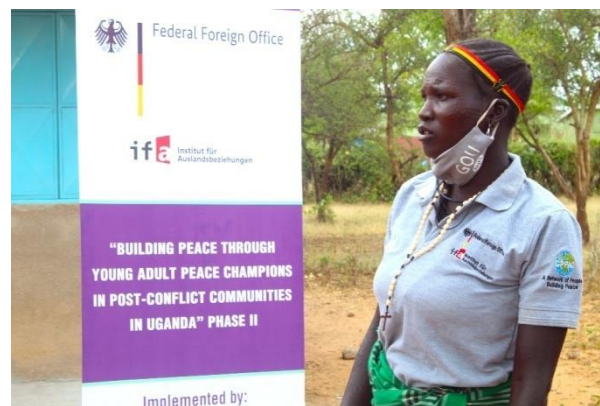
Nakong Joseph – Wakatau group - Kotido: After peace training, he now gathers youth at the social center, talks to them about peace and encourage them to join the group. 15 warriors have so far have joined the group. Nakong also visits communities and talk to individuals and families including parents. He has so far visited and formed new groups in six villages with members ranging from 15 to 50. His group is also given a platform during prayer at Nakapelimoru catholic church to sensitize youth to avoid cattle raids and embrace peace.

Longorok Teyo – Nakapelemoru sub county –Kotido district



Teyo was lured into raiding by his fellows – people he says he learnt from. Teyo started raiding at age 18. Teyo and his friends would mainly attack and raid the Turkana neighboring communities across the border in Kenya. We would get from 10-100 cows in one raid and then we share. “After raiding twice, I started feeling the dangers of raiding. The places were very far, had many injuries and many people would die” – Teyo narrates. Sometimes, almost the entire group would be killed. “And after raiding the cows, most of the share was taken by the elder people” he adds. In one of the raids, Teyo was nearly killed and survived with bullet wounds. This experience made him abandon raiding. One of the former warriors who was recently recruited says; “I have transformed from a warrior to champion in shoe making and now training other youth”. He now wishes that more of his fellow youth would abandon the dangerous acts of raiding and embrace livelihood activities.

Angela Hellen’s story – Panyangara: I participated in cooking and providing alcohol to the raiders and would get a share from the raid. I also kept their guns. Sometimes I made loses when some of the raiders died in the raids without paying me. I stopped participating when the army learned that I was helping the raiders. I was arrested, but later released. Life was hard until I joined the Peace Champions. I now sell local brew from the loan I took from the group. I am now a role model on peace in the community, I am no longer traumatized. From the money I earn I can pay fees. My children are now learning to make caps, rosaries and bangles from which they too earn some income.



Aporo Joan – Aromo subcounty –Lira



Aporo was abducted by the LRA when she was 10 years - in Primary 2 class. She was abducted while going to sleep in the bush – as the practice was in order to escape rebel attacks at night. She spent 2 months in captivity. She managed to escape during a cross fire fighting between the rebels and the UPDF soldiers. However the two months caused a lot of damage in her life. Up to today, Aporo feels helpless and is filled with sadness and anger because of the traumatizing experiences (details withheld) she went through while in captivity. After benefiting from the project, she says he has learnt to overcome trauma. She is now reaching out to fellow former abductees and counseling them.

Achola Jackline (Lira): Her parents were killed in the infamous Bar-Lonyo massacre when she was 4 years. “I became the father and mother”. She became orphaned and hopeless. She now says hope is now renewed in her.

Aromo peace group (Lira). From the connectors for peace project of bee keeping project, the group was able to earn Ug Shs 12.5 million in the honey harvest of December 2020. This is key in reducing the drivers of conflicts (such as unemployment) in the area. The groups has also started utilizing and selling bi-products like propolis, candles, wax, among others.