

# ***PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN***

November, 2009

Akobo, Gummuruk, and Pibor Sudan



Sponsored by Presbyterian Women (USA)

Facilitated by RECONCILE; Yei, Sudan

## SYNOPSIS

In 2009, southern Sudan overtook Darfur as the deadliest region in Sudan, claiming the lives of 2,500 people and displacing thousands more. 1,400 of these deaths occurred between February and August in Jonglei State, largely as a result of inter-ethnic conflict between the Murle and Nuer tribes of the region. There are many explanations for the fighting, ranging from decades-old disputes to third-party spurning and instigation. Whatever the case, the violence has heightened, and now involves relatively new instances of women and child casualties and abductions. Such intense conflict has had an extreme traumatising effect on members of the two tribes, especially women and children. Additionally, there have been reports of a syphilis epidemic in the Murle area of Pibor, causing strains on reproduction and possibly exacerbating the issue of child abductions and early marriages of young girls. This has added to the issue of trauma within the communities.

The Resource Centre for Civil Leadership (RECONCILE) recognized the need to address the emotional and spiritual wounds in the Nuer and Murle communities, as well as the conflict between the tribes in general. With the generous support of Presbyterian Women USA, RECONCILE was able to conduct three workshops during the month of November, 2009: one in the Nuer community of Akobo, and two in the Murle communities of Gummuruk and Pibor. The workshops were for the women of the communities, and specifically targeted the issue of violence against women and children. Universal rights of women and children were explained to the participants—including rights concerning education, work, and marriage. In an area that represents a miniscule literacy rate among women, denial of education to daughters, and early marriage of young girls, these rights were embraced enthusiastically by the workshop participants.

Dynamics of trauma were also addressed. Inter-ethnic violence, and the subsequent rise in domestic violence, have both contributed to trauma among members of the communities. The women learned how trauma affects these communities, including women and children, and were taught valuable skills concerning how to deal with traumatized community members. Participants were taught that the way trauma is dealt with can lead one of two directions: either towards an ongoing cycle of violence, or a direction that leads to eventual healing and reconciliation. Methods were explained to help redirect traumatised victims from the former path to the latter.

The violence itself was also addressed. Men were invited to this portion of the workshops due to their close connection to some of the perpetrators of the conflicts. Root causes of the inter-ethnic violence were uncovered, and the short-and-long-term importance of ceasing the deadly fighting was reiterated.

Finally, the women drafted resolutions and recommendations for themselves and their communities. These documents outlined ways for the women to help move their communities forward into a time of peace and healing. Additionally, correspondence was established between the women of the two tribes, expressing their common desire for reconciliation and paving the way for a peace meeting between the communities in early 2010.

## INTRODUCTION

In November of 2009, RECONCILE conducted three workshops for Presbyterian Church of Sudan women in Jonglei State, Sudan. In April of 2008, a workshop concerning psychosocial and civic education training was held in Pibor. During the workshop, a request was made by the female participants, who were members of the Presbyterian Church of Sudan, that there be a workshop in the future held specifically for women concerning women's issues including domestic violence, marriage of young girls, and issues related to syphilis. Presbyterian Women (PCUSA) agreed to support this program enabling RECONCILE implement three workshops for women in Akobo and Pibor counties— in the village of Gummuruk and the towns of Pibor and Akobo. 2009 was a challenging year for many communities in Jonglei State, which has been plagued with inter-ethnic conflict and tribal fighting. There has been an intensifying conflict between the Murle and Nuer ethnic groups. The conflicts between the two groups have included cattle-raiding, child abduction, rape, and killings of women and children, and has caused the building of tension within communities and households. Upon compiling numbers from various reports an estimated 1,200 - 1,400 people died between February and August 2009 from such attacks.

While previous to this domestic violence and abuse against children was a concern in these areas, there has been an overall rise in such incidents accompanying the intense inter-ethnic violence. In addition to the conflict, there has been much worry over the dangers of syphilis in the Pibor County area, causing sickness and even miscarriages and infertility among women. A group of PCUSA medical volunteers did an outreach to Pibor in February 2008 found 25% of the patients they saw to be syphilis positive. It has been speculated, and quite widely believed both within the Murle community and surrounding ethnic groups, that the lack of fertility among women has caused a rise in the rate of child abductions and marriage of girls at a young age. All of these facts reinforced the necessity of a workshop addressing community and inter-ethnic violence especially issues regarding women and children.

The following is a narrative report of the workshops which included fifty female members of the Presbyterian Church in the Gummuruk, Pibor and Akobo. (Ecumenical guests were encouraged to be invited and did attend the workshop in Akobo but there are no other denominations in Pibor County) As many as 10 additional women joined us for much of the time in each location. The facilitation team, sponsored by RECONCILE, consisted of the following facilitators:

- Ms. Milcah Lalam RECONCILE Programs Manager ( Akobo)
- Ms. Viaba Flomo, Lutheran Church of Liberia Trauma Healing & Reconciliation Program (Akobo)
- Rev. Debbie Braaksma- RECONCILE Peace Institute Principal , Presbyterian Church USA/Reformed Church in America mission worker ( Akobo, Gummuruk, Pibor)
- Ms. Becky Obong- Gender and Child Welfare Administrator for Magwi County ( Gummuruk, Pibor)
- Mr. Lagu John Julius- Health Education Consultant from Yei County ( Gummuruk, Pibor)

Translators for the workshops included Rev. Orozu Lokine of the Presbyterian Church in Sudan in Pibor, and PCOS Evangelist/RECONCILE Key Mobilizer Rev. John Tubuwa both of which are employees of Serving and Learning Together (SALT). Mrs. Rebecca Nyanhial Bimoun, Evangelist Peter Biel from Akobo presbytery and Evangelist Peter Mama, Key Mobilizers for RECONCILE and RECONCILE Peace Institute graduates, also helped out with a few of the

workshop activities. Nathan Magrath, a Reformed Church in America volunteer serving with RECONCILE, documented the proceedings and assisted with group work in Gummuruk and Pibor.

### **Milcah insert Akobo report**

## **GUMMURUK WORKSHOP**

### **DAY ONE**

**Thursday, 19 November**

#### **Opening, Introduction, and Expectations**

The first day of the workshop opened with a short “good morning” made by Rev. Debbie Braaksma. An opening devotional was then conducted by three of the participants, consisting of the very enthusiastic singing of a song, a prayer, and a scripture reading. The Bible passage was Luke 11:27-28

<sup>27</sup>As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!” <sup>28</sup>But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

The woman who gave the scripture reading stated that this passage shows that we must pay attention to and obey God’s Word. She gave thanks for the fact that this workshop could take place. She also stated the excitement aroused by the fact that so many Murle women could get together in one place—an experience she claimed Murle society did not usually see. Following the devotional were the introductions of the facilitation group from RECONCILE. Rev. Braaksma, Becky Obong, Lagu John Julius, Rev. John Tubuwa and Nathan Magrath all introduced themselves. Rev. Orozu did not require an introduction, as he is a well-known figure in the Pibor area. Next, the participants individually introduced themselves. Many introduced themselves as deaconesses of the Presbyterian Church in Gummuruk or other nearby churches. The workshop participants then expressed what their expectations were for the workshop. These expectations included:

- Learning rules about education.
- Learning about disease.
- Learning about the word of God.
- Learning about how to live as Murle in the community as good people, living in a peaceful way.
- Learning how to defend the Murle people from a bad reputation.
- Learning how to deal with denied social services.
- Learning how to live peacefully in a household with one’s husband and children.
- Learning how to deal with the lack of education among girls and the problem of girls marrying at a young age.
- Learning how to serve God as leaders.
- Learning about information to be shared in the household.

- Learning how to deal with children rebelling against Christianity.
- One woman stated, “We are not literate, so we need you to vocalize what we need to know.”

### **Overview of Workshop- Rev. Debbie**

Rev. Debbie Braaksma explained the rationale of the workshop for the participants. She explained that the workshop “Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Children” was held in the Nuer town of Akobo, is now in the Murle village of Gummuruk, and will again be held in the town of Pibor the following week. It was explained that in 2008, the women of Pibor had asked for a workshop expressly for women to address women’s concerns without the presence of men. There was a desire for both domestic and tribal violence to be considered, and this workshop was created to address both of these issues. In addition, Rev. Debbie stated that the rights of women and children would be overviewed, and the issue of syphilis, a disease that had been rumored to be a local epidemic, would also be addressed. Rev. Debbie explained that during the last two days of the workshop, the Murle women of Gummuruk would be charged with the task of figuring out what steps they could take to help bring peace to the community and their own homes. The men were also invited to attend the workshop on the final day as the issue of inter-ethnic conflict was to be addressed. At this point Rev. Debbie informed the audience that the Nuer women of Akobo had written the Murle women of Pibor a letter (Appendix A). The letter appealed for a meeting between the Nuer Presbyterian women of Akobo and the Murle Presbyterian women of Pibor in order to try to advance prospects for peace between the two groups. The reading of the translated letter by Rev. Orozu aroused great applause among the women. At this point the men in the church were dismissed and the workshop got underway.

### **Workshop Norms, Rules, and Guidelines- Rev. Debbie**

First on the agenda for the women in Gummuruk was the setting forth of some guidelines and rules for the workshop. Rev. Debbie stated that for the week, everyone attending the workshop was going to be like family. With this being the case, the women were asked to think of some ways to help the workshop run smoother. The women came up with the following rules:

- 1) Do not interrupt while others are talking. One person should speak at a time.
- 2) We should stay on time.
- 3) Bigger children (children past the breastfeeding stage) should not be in the workshop.

In addition to these, Rev. Debbie stated that we must all be respectful of each other, even if there is disagreement. She expressed the importance of keeping confidentiality in the workshop, especially given the potential sensitivity of some of the stories and information shared by the women. Rev. Debbie also informed the women that if there was ever a time when the women would like to share something in the workshop without the presence of the male translators and documentation officer, that they could be asked to leave. The women explained that they have nothing to hide, and that the presence of these men was not a problem.

### **Activity: The Rights of Women and Children- Rev. Debbie**

One of the first tasks carried out was an activity geared towards discovering what some of the opinions and thoughts of the participants were concerning the rights of the women and children of the community. Rev. Debbie read off a series of statements concerning rights of women and children. If a participant agreed with the statement, she would stand on one side of the church. If the participant disagreed, she would stand on the opposite side. After each statement, the women on each side were counted and recorded. A couple of women from each side were then

asked to explain why they agreed or disagreed with the statement. These statements, numbers, and explanations by the participants are listed below.

- 1) The only work a woman should do is cooking and digging.
  - Number of those who agree: 55
    - Reason: We have been raised to believe this.
    - Reason: As Murle women, this is what we are supposed to do.
  - Number of those who disagree: 5
    - Reason: Women are made to cook and dig, but there are other jobs they can do as well.
    - Reason: There are many types of jobs women can do, not just cooking and digging.
- 2) Women do not need money because they cannot learn how to use it.
  - Agree: 50
    - We have never been given money.
    - We do not know how to use money.
  - Disagree: 10
    - We need money to buy things for the house.
- 3) When a woman leaves her husband she should forget about her children—she does not have the right to have them anymore.
  - Agree: 16
    - You should stay with the man you married. If the devil comes, you leave, but the children must stay with the man.
  - Disagree: 44

This question faced general confusion, whether it was because of the way the question was worded, how it was translated, or how it was interpreted by the women. It is for this reason that there are fewer explanations for agreement and disagreement.

- 4) Men have the right to beat women:
  - Agree: 41
    - He is the head of the household—women must accept correction.
    - Women are like children. They should be corrected for their many mistakes.
    - Women must be beaten so they do not repeat mistakes.
  - Disagree: 18
    - Everyone is equal. We have new life.
    - If I am always a good servant to my man, he has no reason to beat me.
- 5) A woman should not speak to her husband like she would speak to a friend, she must show him more respect.
  - Agree: 32
    - He is important and responsible. He taught me how to be a woman.
  - Disagree: 2

At this point the women are raising their hands instead of moving to opposite sides of the room. Participation in the exercise seems to be decreasing due to either fatigue, confusion, or a combination of both.

- 6) The Bible teaches us that if a woman is being beaten she should be patient and accept that sometimes Christians have to suffer.
  - Agree: 20
    - Yes, the Bible teaches us this.
    - Yes, according to the Bible we need to suffer.

- Disagree: 5
- 7) A woman should never report her husband to the tribal or government authorities if he beats her.
  - Agree: 8
    - Women are like children.
  - Disagree: 1
- 8) Women should have the right to choose the man which they wish to marry.
  - Agree: 4
    - When daughter chooses wrong, the parents cannot be blamed.
    - The connection of the heart must be thought of.
  - Disagree: 25
    - To take care of a daughter, the parents must choose someone who can take care of her for life.

As can be seen above, there was unequal participation from question-to-question. There was a general sense that the women were somewhat confused by at least a couple of the questions, and may have become tired or frustrated.

### **The Rights of Women and Children- Becky Obong**

Following the activity performed by Rev. Debbie and the participants, Becky Obong explained the rights women and children should have. First, Becky read the rights listed under “Women’s Rights and the United Nations Conventions – Specific Conventions that Relate to Women.” She covered the topics of equality and non-discrimination, work and education, participation, marriage, and violence against women. The specific rights read to the women can be found in a handout prepared by Rev. Debbie, and can be found in the back of this report as Appendix B. Becky then recited the ten principles outlined in the “Declaration of the Rights of the Child,” another handout prepared by Rev. Debbie which can be found as Appendix C. Next, the women were split into five groups. Each group was assigned a certain topic pertaining to the rights of women or children. They were told to talk about their specific topic, and then either perform a drama or tell a story about the topic.

The first group was assigned the topic of protection of a child against “...neglect, cruelty, and exploitation,” (Principle #9 in Appendix C). The group chose to perform a drama. In the drama, two parents send a male child to fetch water, then tie the family’s cows for milking, and then collect something else. The husband/father is very abusive. The son loses a cow, and is sent to live with his uncle as punishment for being irresponsible.

The second group was assigned a woman’s right to work and education. This group also performed a drama. In the drama, two women got into a fight. One of the women was brought to the police and was given a written order of arrest to give to another officer. The woman was illiterate and could not read the written order, but she figured it was an order to arrest the woman she had been fighting. However, on delivering the message to the second officer, the woman who delivered the message was promptly



arrested. This drama was meant to show the importance of education, especially literacy.

The third group was assigned the topic of a child's right to benefits of social security (Principle #4 in Appendix C). A drama was performed. In the drama, a husband brought home money, gave some to his children for biscuits for school, and also gave some to his wife. The husband told his family that some money must be put away for food for children. He stated that the children must be supported now, so they can support others in the future. The women then explained that if a mother cannot support her children, a father must do it.

The fourth group was assigned the topic of a woman's rights concerning marriage. For this topic, a woman in the group chose to tell a story. The story was actually a statement of how marriage works in Murle culture. The woman stated that women are forced to marry. If a divorce happens, the man forces the ex-wife to her parent's home. The woman then explained that some women absolutely refuse to return to their parent's house, and that they would rather die than leave her children. The woman stating all this then told the audience that family planning is needed in the community, and women must also have equal rights to children as men. She explained that the community needed change.

The fifth group was assigned the topic of violence against women. They performed a drama. In the drama, a woman forgets to make a fire, and her husband beats her severely. The drama actually looked quite realistic, and some of the children in the church cried.

Debbie closed the day by asking if the violence seen here makes God happy. She explained that tomorrow the workshop would cover what the Bible says about violence in the home and community.

## **DAY TWO**

**Friday, 20 November**

### **Opening Devotion**

The opening devotion was Colossians 2:1-5:

<sup>1</sup>I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. <sup>2</sup>My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

The woman who delivered the devotional stated that we must all live in love and understanding. Before Christ was introduced to us in Gummuruk, we were lost non-believers, but now it is different. This workshop is teaching us much about how Christ wants us to live in our communities and households. These five days will help us to live in love.

### **Re-Cap of Thursday- Rev. Debbie**

Rev. Debbie asked the women to share with the workshop what they learned yesterday. The following are a few of the responses:

- I learned about the rights of children, and the right that children have to go to school.

- I learned about the relationship between husband and wife. We must live in respect of one-another.
- I learned about taking care of children in a Christian way.
- I learned that a daughter should choose her husband, and should not be forced to marry.
- I learned that alcohol is bad for raising children.
- I learned that women should be treated fairly, treated as friends, and not beaten.

### **What the Bible Says about Family Treatment- Rev. Debbie**

After the recap of the previous day, Rev. Debbie explained that the workshop was going to explore what the Bible says about how family members should treat each other. She split the women into the five groups they were in the previous day, and each group was given two passages from the Bible. With the passages, the women were asked to answer two questions:

- 1) What does this passage say about how family members should treat each other?
- 2) What does this passage say about the role of women?

Although only 3-4 women could write their names many owned red Murle language New Testaments, which they could read, and they used these help complete the task given to them.

The first group, led by Rev. Orozu, was given II Timothy 2:24:

<sup>24</sup>And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

A woman from the group reported that this passage teaches us how to live in a good, peaceful way, and that everyone should be treated equally in a good heart. The second passage given to Rev. Orozu's group was Proverbs 31:11:

<sup>11</sup> Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

Unfortunately, the Old Testament of the Bible has not yet been translated into the Murle language, so Rev. Debbie summarized the passage and its meaning. Rev. Debbie stated that spouses must trust each other in confidence.

The second group, led by Peter Mama, was given the passage Titus 1:6-7:

<sup>6</sup>An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. <sup>7</sup>Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

A woman reported that this passage tells us that a believer must be righteous and blameless. A leader must be humble; a husband must have only one wife, and not be drunk or violent; and children must understand and respect their parents. At this point Rev. Debbie asked the women if a Christian leader can beat his wife or use harsh words. The women responded 'no,' and one of the women stated, "We must live peacefully." The second passage was Proverbs 31:14-16:

<sup>14</sup> She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. <sup>15</sup> She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. <sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

As was mentioned earlier, the Old Testament is not in the Murle language yet, so Rev. Debbie summarized the verses. She explained that the passage describes a noble woman—a woman who can own land, just as Becky explained yesterday, and has a husband who has full confidence in her.

The third group, led by Becky Obong, was given two New Testament passages. The first was 1 Peter 3:7:

<sup>7</sup>Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

The woman who reported on this passage stated that the verse was telling husbands and wives to submit to each other and live together in love. She also said that since women are weaker than men, men must take care of their wives. The second passage was Matthew 5:22:

<sup>22</sup>But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

The woman who reported this verse stated that anger will bring judgment and condemnation, so we must not be angry with one-another. She then stated that this verse runs counter to Murle culture, which treats women as less than men. Rev. Debbie then interjected, stating that mothers must be sure to be supportive of children, just as husbands must respect wives. Everyone must be respected as God's children.



The fourth group, led by Rev. John Tubuwa, was given the passage Ephesians 4:31-32:

<sup>31</sup>Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

The woman who reported these verses explained that bitterness and anger must be gotten rid of. We must be kind and compassionate to others, and also

be forgiving. The second passage was Ezekiel 45:9:

<sup>9</sup> "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have gone far enough, O princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing my people, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Again, this passage is not in the Murle Bibles, so Rev. John Tubuwa summarized the passage and explained that the verse simply tells us to avoid violence everywhere.

The fifth and final group, led by Lagu John Julius, was given the passage Ephesians 4:26-27:

<sup>26</sup>"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup>and do not give the devil a foothold.

The woman reporting this passage explained that we cannot let our anger lead us to sin. We must solve our problems "before the sun goes down." Anger opens up room for Satan, and once we are led away, it is hard to come back.

### **Trauma: What it Is- Rev. Debbie & Becky**

After all of the groups had reported on their respective Bible passages, Rev. Debbie explained that these Bible verses all speak to the situation of tribal relations as well. She told the participants that they had been learning much about household violence—physical, emotional, economic, sexual—but she assured them that she was aware of the violence taking place from outside of the community as well. Approximately 1200-1400 Nuer and Murle had died in recent months. Rev. Debbie asked how many of the participants had a loved one killed or abducted.

Eight out of fifty seven said 'yes.' Rev. Debbie used this statistic to explain that Gummuruk was a community containing many people with deep wounds called 'trauma.' She made sure that people understood that 'trauma' was not the loss of a grandmother to natural causes, but that the pain caused by the loss of two of Elizabeth's children (one of the participants) was. This deep, deep pain could be caused by violence within the home or as a direct result of inter-ethnic fighting.

Becky then read "The Story of John Mba," in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 20-21). The story is about a family caught in the middle of a rebel soldier attack. During the attack, the husband/father was caught, and his arm was cut off. The remainder of the story discusses how John, his wife Mary, and his son are affected by trauma caused by the attack. Rev. Debbie then proceeded to ask questions about the individual family members and how they were affected. First, she asked what happened to John after the attack. Responses included the following:

- He is now angry all the time.
- He beats the wife and children for no reason.
- He is losing his faith.
- He is keeping his anger in his heart.
- He is having nightmares.
- Rev. Debbie adds that he is having a hard time sleeping.

Next, Rev. Debbie asked about Mary, John's wife, and what happened to her. Responses included:

- She is always sad.
- She is always thinking and is regretful.
- She is experiencing hardships.
- She is having bad dreams.
- She is not receiving counseling.
- Rev. Debbie adds that she has no interest in food, sometimes feels like dying, and is scared to be alone. She also pointed out how hard it was for a traumatized Mary to be a good mother.

Rev. Debbie then asked about the son. Responses included:

- He has started drinking.
- He wants to run away from home.
- He is not receiving counseling from his parents because they cannot counsel.
- He was a great teacher before, but now he is not.
- He hangs out with bad company.
- Rev. Debbie adds that he gets headaches and stomachaches, yet no problems are found by the doctors.

After the series of questions, Rev. Debbie talked about the effects of trauma. She explained that trauma affects us severely, and that it can cause serious problems if we hold onto this pain in our hearts. Trauma can affect how we think, feel, and behave. She told the participants that what was read in the story is typical of those who have this type of pain. Rev. Debbie also used the local example of the Pibor area, stating that the community is full of people with this type of pain, and that it is hard for a community to function properly with anger and fighting between broken people. Becky asked the participants what they have noticed about their community. Responses included:

- People are fearful of the Dinka, we are constantly waiting for them, even when they are not coming.
- We are in constant fear of attack. At one point we all ran to the bush to hide, even though no attack came.

Becky continued the questions by asking what their culture tells them to do in situations similar to this. Responses were:

- If there is pain, we need to solve it.
- Revenge must happen.
- We know that we have to pray and not run away.

Becky then asked the participants what they thought a wound of the heart was. They answered that it was anger. Rev. Debbie elaborated upon the questioning by asking the group what John would do if he were a Murle man. The participants responded that revenge would take place, and the hand of the wrongdoer would be cut off. They also said he could go to a friend with his problem, and could even cry tears.\* Rev. Debbie applauded the fact that the men were allowed to cry, and stated that in the Bible, Jesus cried as well.

Rev. Debbie then talked about violence caused by trauma. She stated that if pain is held inside, it can come out as anger, which can be taken out on the family. She then asked the group if they have noticed an increase in violence in the home since the escalation of tribal conflicts. The women responded that they had. Rev. Debbie also referenced a suicide and community fighting that had happened the previous night, and stated that these acts may have been induced by trauma as well. Debbie then continued her questioning about Murle culture by asking what a Murle woman would do in a situation like Mary. The women responded that she would be allowed to cry. She could try to talk to her husband, or talk to another woman. Murle women are apparently quite supportive of one another.



Rev. Debbie also referenced a suicide and community fighting that had happened the previous night, and stated that these acts may have been induced by trauma as well. Debbie then continued her questioning about Murle culture by asking what a Murle woman would do in a situation like Mary. The women responded that she would be allowed to cry. She could try to talk to her husband, or talk to another woman. Murle women are apparently quite supportive of one another.

### **The Journey of Unhealed Trauma and the Trauma Healing Journey- Rev. Debbie.**

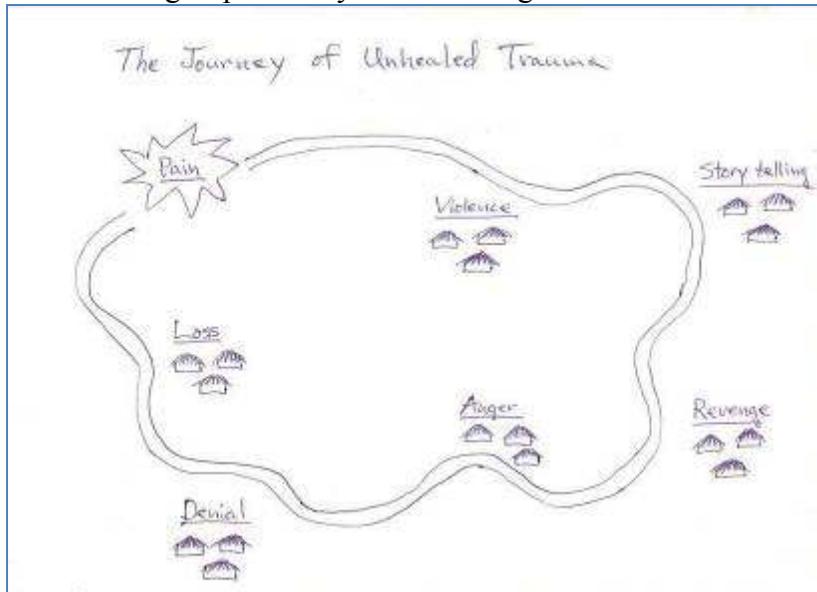
The next portion of the workshop was devoted to studying two paths that can be followed after a traumatic event. One is called the *Journey of Unhealed Trauma*, which outlines the cycle of violence and pain that takes place if trauma is not dealt with in the correct fashion. The second path is called the *Trauma Healing Journey*, which begins with a traumatic event and eventually

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\* This differs from the response of the Murle women in Pibor town, who said that a Murle man is not allowed to cry tears.

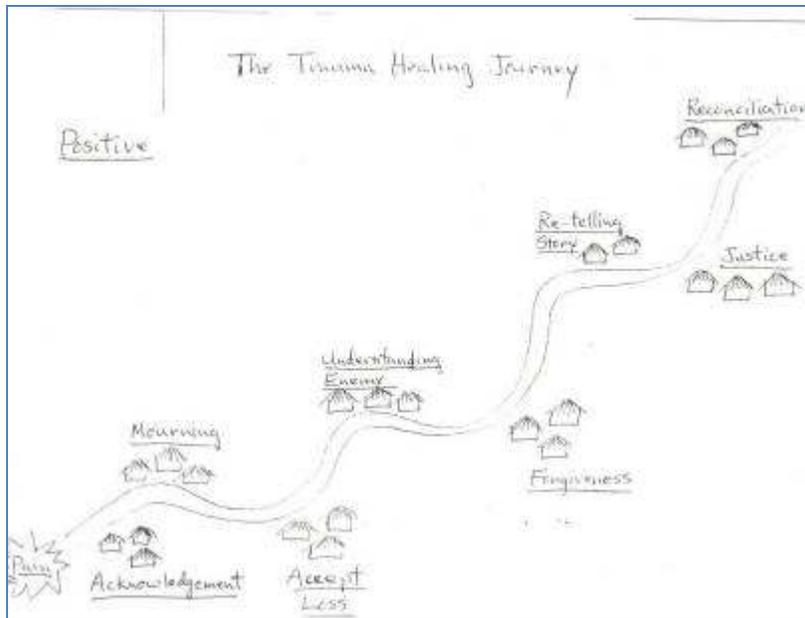
leads to forgiveness and reconciliation. Both paths were described in the context of inter-ethnic fighting. Pictures of the two journeys were drawn up and can be seen below.

First, Rev. Debbie introduced the *Journey of Unhealed Trauma*. She explained that this is the first of two roads that can be traveled down, and it is a very common road to travel in Sudan. There are six villages along this road: the villages of 'loss,' 'denial,' 'anger,' 'revenge,' 'story-telling,' and 'violence.' Rev. Debbie placed special emphasis on the 'story-telling' aspect of the cycle, stating that every ethnic group tells a story in which it is no more than a victim, and the other ethnic group is always in the wrong.



**The Journey of Unhealed Trauma**

Second, Rev. Debbie presented the *Trauma Healing Journey*, which is the second of the two paths that could be taken. She explained that this is not an easy journey, and can be thought of as an up-hill climb. The "villages" along this path are the villages of 'acknowledgment,' 'mourning,' 'acceptance,' 'understanding enemy,' 'forgiveness,' 're-telling story,' 'justice,' and finally 'reconciliation.' Rev. Debbie used the conflict between the Dinka and the Murle as an example to help explain this journey. She told the group that if there is a Dinka attack, it is necessary to try to understand why the event happened, and what reasoning the Dinka were using. She also explained that forgiveness does not necessarily mean you forget what happened, and justice must be served as well. However, as Christians we must eventually reconcile with each other.



The Trauma Healing Journey

### Trauma Healing Skills- Rev. Debbie

Next, Rev. Debbie introduced some skills to “get people on the right road.” She explained that some people need help to acknowledge and mourn a loss, even if it is years later. During a traumatic event, our bodies are naturally inclined to either fight or run—an experience many of the participants were familiar with. In fact, after being asked, every participant responded that they had experienced the effects of trauma at some point. Rev. Debbie continued by stating that in such situations, we do not think well, and we seem to go into a “survival mode.” This can be very harmful for families. To avoid this, we must all make sure we allow ourselves time to mourn. To put this into a Biblical context, Rev. Debbie recited Matthew 26:37-38:

<sup>37</sup>He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

Rev. Debbie summarized the passage and pointed out that even Jesus expressed his sorrow through use of his friends. With this being the case, we must all be sure to share our burdens, especially some of the heavy burdens within this community. To reinforce the biblical perspective on mourning, Rev. Debbie explained that the Psalms, although not yet in the Murle Bible, are loaded with songs of lament written by David. It is good to mourn. We do not want to end up like John and Mary from the story. We must help people to talk about their pain; it is important to tell the story of our heart.

At this point, Becky began to explain how to be an active listener. Active listening is important for helping a friend or family member to release their pain. Becky explained that there are a few questions that can be asked to help guide a conversation with someone who was affected by a traumatic event. These questions can be found in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 29), and are as follows:



- 1) What happened?
- 2) How did you feel?
- 3) What was the hardest part for you?
- 4) What gave you strength and helped you get through it?
- 5) How did God help you?
- 6) How were you able to help others?

At this point two volunteers were asked to come to the front of the group and demonstrate active listening. One woman would tell her story, and the other woman would use the skills taught to guide the conversation. The two women conducted a role-play in the Murle language with a running translation by Rev. John Tubuwa. The two women did fairly well, but Rev. Debbie advised that the listener be sure to listen more than talk. She explained that too much advice on the part of the listener makes the process of healing seem simpler than it really is. The pain should just be allowed to be expressed. She explained that a very good way to do this is to use the questions that were stated by Becky. Rev. Orozu repeated the questions in Murle for the women who could not read. Rev. Debbie explained that the first three questions are good to help release the pain, while the second three questions help the survivor to feel strong. Two more volunteers were asked to demonstrate the skills they were learning. Again, the listener seemed to convey more advice than was helpful. Rev. Debbie decided to demonstrate with another woman. The woman told her story to Rev. Debbie, and Rev. Debbie listened and used a couple of the above questions to guide the conversation.

Following this exercise, Rev. Debbie asked the women how they deal with losses during peacetime (as opposed to a time of high inter-ethnic conflict). A woman responded that they try to bring encouragement, and supporting women will stay with the grieving woman all night. Rev. Debbie suggested that it may also be a good idea to deliver practical items to the grieving person, such as food.



Rev. Debbie then introduced a couple of relaxation techniques, including a breathing exercise and a tension exercise. The women were also shown how to massage each other, and the women also performed a couple of dances as possible stress-relievers.\*

Next, Rev. Debbie provided some tips to help alleviate the emotional wounds of another person. These tips were:

- Provide a safe place for the victim of trauma.
- Provide a little space for the person.
- Do not take deflected anger personally.
- Try to keep the family together.
- Do not give too much advice.

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\* Dancing was taught at the workshop as a possible stress reliever after a traumatizing time; however, it should be noted that the participants explained that dancing is not a customary practice during a time of grieving.

- Share the relaxation techniques learned earlier.

## **DAY THREE**

**Saturday, 21 November**

### **Opening Devotion**

The opening devotional was given. It dealt with Matthew 5:6:  
“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.  
The message was not translated into English.

### **Re-Cap of Friday- Rev. Debbie**

After the morning devotional, Rev. Debbie asked the participants what they learned the previous day. The women came up with the following responses:

- We learned how to help others who are hurting.
- We learned that we must be respectful servants of God.
- It is good to share problems with others.
- We learned more about how important education is.
- When you keep things in your heart, they can kill you.
- Goodness should start in the house, and it will spread outwards from there.
- Spouses should respect each other
- Girls should be able to choose their partner.
- Girls should go to school.

### **Violence in the Home- Rev. Debbie**

The first item on the agenda for Saturday was violence in the home. Rev. Debbie introduced the topic by explaining that the abundance of violence in the community can easily find its way into the household. Rev. Debbie proceeded to read “John and Anna: A Story of Domestic Violence” in *Rethinking Domestic Violence* (Naker and Michau 58). The short story tells the tale of a woman, Anna, who is beaten often by her husband, John. Anna is told that she must work hard to make up for the dowry paid. Her work is exploited by John. John often uses her money to go drinking at night, and he will beat her for the smallest reasons, mostly to prove to everyone that he is the boss of the house. After reading the story, Rev. Debbie asked the women what they would do if Anna came to them for help. Three responses were:

- I would tell her to not say anything, but persevere through it.
- She must continue to suffer, as this is what God wills.
- Don’t resist, just be patient.

After hearing these responses, Rev. Debbie explained that we must all understand what Anna has been through. She has probably been through more than she is willing to say. Many women feel shame, and what they have gone through could possibly be long-term. She went on to state that if a woman is going through all of this, it is possible the children are as well. A woman can often not control her husband’s behavior, and the situation is very dangerous. The entire family can be hurt both physically and emotionally. Rev. Debbie went on to remind the women how much God hates violence. God rescues those who are in violent situations. She referenced Psalm 72:14, which states:

<sup>14</sup> He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.

God’s heart is bent on rescuing those trapped in violence, so what should our own hearts be? God works through us. We cannot say “be patient and stay there.” The Bible states that those

who wrong others must be corrected. Rev. Debbie then explained that there are three things we must do when we see such violence:

- 1) We need to protect the victims and children from the husband's/father's abuse. We may need to move beyond the family and call in law enforcement officials. We cannot simply say "persevere."
- 2) The violence must be stopped. This may need to happen through intervention by a headman, chief, or law enforcement agency. The abuser must be stopped, and this may even mean prison. These first two steps **MUST** happen before step #3 is carried out.
- 3) The marriage and family must be restored *if possible*. If it is not possible, then mourn its loss. God desires for a man and a woman to stay together for life, but our world is a broken place. Divorce can happen, and we must not think that those who go through this are bad people.

God's desire is to protect women, and they should not stay in violent situations. The Bible states that we should not keep quiet. Rev. Debbie read Galatians 6:1:

<sup>1</sup>Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

John was sinning, so instead of telling Anna to be patient, we must correct John. At this point, a woman stated that cases such as this were, indeed, happening, and that the teaching they were receiving was eye-opening. She stated that women have been "like the ground—when stepped on, they will not ask, 'why are you stepping on me?'"

Next, Rev. Debbie presented some questions that should be asked if a case of violence in the home presents itself. These questions are:

- Is this the first time this has happened?
- What does he do?
- Is it safe to return home today?
- Are the children safe at home?
- Do you have a plan of where to go if home is not safe? If so, what is that plan?
- What can we, as the church, do to help?
- Do you have food?
- How is the abuse affecting your children?
- Have you noticed any change of your children at school?
- Can we, as the church, reach out to the children in some way?
- How has this abuse affected your relationship with God and the church?

These questions can be used in the same way as the questions talked about yesterday when counseling techniques were addressed. Remember that as Christians, we are not asked to suffer for bad things, but for righteousness. To drive this point home, Rev. Debbie used the example of PCOS Evangelist Othow of Pochalla, who was arrested by the government and tortured for standing up for what he believed was right. He suffered, but for the right reasons. This is the suffering Christians go through, not suffering for bad things, such as husbands beating them. Rev. Debbie then closed this section of the workshop with a prayer for all those in the community who are suffering from domestic violence.

### **Rape and How to Help Rape Victims- Becky Obong**

Next, Becky Obong started the section of the workshop concerning rape. She read the "Story of Ama" (Hill, Hill and Baggé 51-52), a story about a woman who was raped by foreign troops, her subsequent silence on the issue, and the pregnancy and eventual birth of a son due to it. After reading the story, Becky asked the women why they thought Ama kept quiet on the issue of her

rape. A woman responded that Ama was ashamed of what happened. Another woman stated that cases of rape are fairly common in Gummuruk.

At this point a woman interjected with a story of what had happened to her. She said that she was almost raped by the SPLA during the war. At the time, she was living with her brothers. The SPLA forces came and surrounded her house. It was their intention to kill everyone. The woman thought quickly, ran into the “cow room” and dug a hole. She then took off all her cloths and went out to the soldiers. They wanted to rape her, but she pointed at the hole and said that she had just miscarried the day before. The soldiers then decided to not rape her, and they left the family alone. She stated that it was God who saved her.

After this story was told, Rev. Debbie asked if rapes happened during the inter-tribal fighting. The women responded ‘no.’ They said that women and children were abducted, but not raped.

Rape as a weapon of war was only used during the civil war.



At the mention of abductions, another woman decided to share one of her own experiences. She said that she had been in Lekwangole during the attack by the Nuer in March of this year. She recalled that the Nuer surrounded the entire area, ate some meat, and then opened fire on the town. The attackers captured women and children, and had taken six children from a single family. Most of the abducted children have not returned. The woman said that she had run along the river to escape. Some of the women were stopped by the attackers, told to breast feed their babies, and then the babies were taken and the mothers were killed. The woman stated that she and her children were able to escape only with the help of God.

At this point, Becky brought the conversation back to the issue of rape. She asked the women how they thought rape affected people. They responded that rape can bring sickness and shame to a woman. Becky agreed, and stated that rape is one of the most painful experiences a woman can go through. She stated that with all of this being the case, we as a church must bring people in to help everyone truly understand rape and its consequences. Awareness must be raised in communities and households. Men and children must also be educated about rape.

At this point another woman interjected with a story. She said that in between Gummuruk and Pibor a woman was raped. Law enforcement was alerted, but the rapist was not found. The victim was bought to Gummuruk, where she was treated. Her husband was told what happened, and he came to her aid. He understood that it was not her fault, and he was very supportive of her. Rev. Debbie commented that this was an excellent example of a rape case handled well.

### **Syphilis Education, Prevention, and Treatment- Lagu John Julius**

The next section of the workshop addressed the high rate of syphilis in the Pibor area. Lagu John Julius facilitated this block of the workshop. He started out by explaining that syphilis is

transmitted sexually and can come from either a woman or a man. He asked the women if they were at all familiar with the disease. The women said that they were. Lagu then asked if they had any traditional methods to cure the disease. The women explained that traditionally, they had bought a ram, slaughtered it, boiled the fat, and drank the boiled fat.

Next, Lagu explained some of the symptoms of syphilis. He stated that the disease can attack the reproductive system, and can possibly lead to infertility.\* Children who are born may have serious birth defects or mental disabilities. Lagu then asked if such cases are familiar in Gummuruk. One woman responded that she had witnessed a woman who had to have a miscarriage fetus removed from her womb. A doctor later told the woman that she had syphilis, and had probably been born with it. The woman telling the story said that she herself was infertile due to syphilis. She also stated that out of 15 children, she is one of five who survived. She is not sure if the reason for this is syphilis as well.

Another woman addressed the workshop and said that she had been sick for a long time. She said that she had one boy who was now in school, but she is still sick. She gave birth to another child who was sick and died. One other time, she said that she had to abort a child.† After that experience, she has had no more pregnancies.

Lagu then continued to list off some of the signs and symptoms of syphilis with the assistance of a chart displaying where on the body syphilis can affect. Another chart was then displayed to show how to prevent oneself from contracting the disease, including sexual discipline until marriage, getting tested with one's partner, and being faithful in marriage.

At this point, Rev. Debbie asked the participants how many of them were currently showing symptoms. Of the 59 participants, 46 said they had symptoms. She then asked how many women had experienced miscarriages and how many miscarriages they had had. A total of 68 miscarriages had been experienced by 34 women. Of these women, seven (7) had experienced at least three miscarriages each.‡

A chart displaying how to care and treat syphilis was then shown and explained by Lagu. Finally, he asked if the women had any questions or comments. A woman exclaimed that she prays a doctor comes to Gummuruk who can help them with their problems. Rev. Debbie agreed that there was a need for a doctor, but she also reminded the women that there was a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) clinic in Gummuruk that had the capacity to test for and treat syphilis. Surprisingly, this statement caused some consternation. The women were quite sure that the MSF clinic was not capable of treating them, and there was a general consensus among the women that this was the case. Lagu then stated that he had seen the correct drugs at the clinic, but it was at this point that he decided to do a further investigation of the MSF clinic in Gummuruk, and came to some findings which caused concern. These findings, along with his findings at the MSF station in Pibor, can be found as an attachment (Appendix D).

### **Violence Against Children- Becky Obong and Rev. Debbie**

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\* It has been rumored that infertility due to syphilis has led to high rates child abductions and pre-mature marriages by the Murle of the area.

† It should be noted that the words 'abortion' and 'miscarriage' seemed to be used interchangeably at times.

‡ It must be remembered that showing some symptoms and experiencing miscarriages does not necessarily mean syphilis. Other problems may be present.

A segment of the workshop devoted to the issue of violence against children was next on the agenda. Becky Obong started the discussion of the topic by stating the importance of taking care of our children, including not overworking them and being sure to send them to school. Rev. Orozu, using the Murle language, then read "The Story of Kasi" in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 41-42). The reading tells the story of Kasi, a boy who's village is attacked. Kasi's family must run into the bush. He witnesses the death of a friend and the burning of his village. The villagers do well in the bush, setting up church activities and some schooling. After a while they return back to their village and try to rebuild, but Kasi is not the same happy, helpful, studious boy he once was.

After Rev. Orozu finished the reading, Becky asked some of the questions outlined in the book on pg. 43, after the story. First, Becky asked how Kasi had behaved before and after the attack. The women responded that before the attack, Kasi was a good student, very well-behaved, playful, and happy. After the attack, the women noticed that Kasi was now frightened and having nightmares, was no longer a good student, was wetting himself at night, was becoming violent, was often confused and thinking different, and was even physically weaker.

Next, Becky asked the women why they thought Kasi's behavior had changed. They responded that he had seen a troubling thing and was now frightened. He watched his friend die, and his environment was changing.

Thirdly, Becky asked the participants how they would react to a child like Kasi. They responded that they would try to find out what was wrong, but they would be largely confused. Becky exclaimed that children are just as important as husbands are; we need to give them care.

How children are affected by trauma was the next subject covered by Becky. A chart displaying the effects of trauma was displayed to help the women visualize what was being talked about. First, the women were asked how they thought children were affected emotionally. Some of the responses included the following:

- They don't trust people.
- They become fearful.
- They are on-edge.
- Rev. Debbie added that depression may occur as well.

Next, Becky asked if the women could think of any physical effects. A woman responded that they are thin and they are not healthy eaters. Rev. Debbie added that they may also develop headaches, stomachaches, and speech impediments. Thirdly, Becky asked about behavioral changes. The women responded:

- They become disobedient.
- They are jumpy.
- They are lazy.
- They don't play well.
- They can commit suicide (the woman added that this has been seen in Gummuruk on multiple occasions).
- Rev. Debbie adds that their games may be violent and they may act young for their age. They may act reckless and unsafe. Relationships with God and the community could be negatively affected.

At this point a woman recalled that there was a child who had been traumatized in their community who killed his mother. She now knows why.

Rev. Debbie then explained how we should react to children of trauma. Firstly, we should create routines within the family to help the child feel comfortable. Secondly, we must listen to the child's pain. This may need to be done through letting the child draw a picture and explain what he/she has drawn. We also need to answer the questions they have. Thirdly, we should observe the child at play to see how they behave. Rev. Debbie reiterated that children must let their pain out. Children do not forget traumatic events easily.

Next, Rev. Debbie asked the women how Murles react to traumatized children traditionally. The women responded that the children can be talked to, but only until a certain age. A woman stated that as a child the act of beating becomes reinforced, and it is too late to change older children. With this, Debbie explained that teenagers have special needs, and that they should be treated as "almost-adults." They should be allowed to mingle with others their own age, and girls should be given their space. Also, telling a child the truth is important.

## **DAY FOUR**

**Sunday, 22 November**

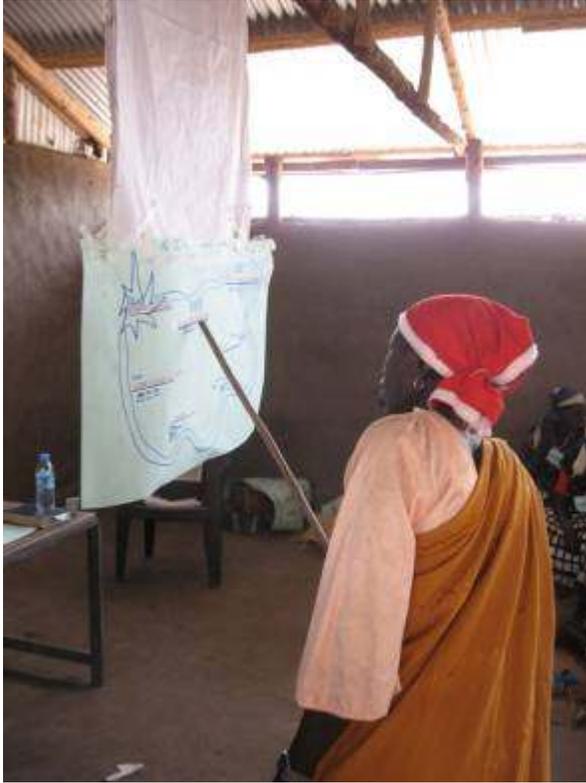
On Sunday, the workshop was held in the afternoon, after a worship service at the church. Rev. Debbie preached on the rights and equality of women. Using biblical passages, she preached about mutual respect between spouses and the qualities of a good Christian woman.

The workshop on this afternoon was to address the problem of inter-ethnic/inter-tribal conflict, and it was decided that it would be a good idea to invite the men as well. Approximately 20 men attended.

### **Re-Cap of Saturday- Rev. Debbie**

Rev. Debbie started the afternoon by asking the women what they recalled learning the day before. Some of their answers included:

- I learned about pain in the heart.
- What trauma does to children.
- I learned about STDs and syphilis, the causes and who may have it.
- How to talk in a good way to traumatized children.
- We must send our children to school—both girls and boys.
- We must create a family emergency plan.
- The importance of a good marriage relationship.
- How to deal with bad husbands and hurt women.
- Daughters should have a choice in marriage



Rev. Debbie then asked a woman to come to the front of the participants and explain the chart of the “Journey of Unhealed Trauma.” The woman read the chart and Rev. John Tubuwa explained what she was reading. Another woman was then asked to explain the “Trauma Healing Journey” chart, and the same thing took place. During the explanation, the woman told a story of when peace came to the Taposo and Murle, and she explained a traditional peace ceremony involving the slaughtering of a goat. Rev. Debbie explained that although peace is good, reconciliation goes even further. Reconciliation takes the desire of both parties, and it takes patience. The story of the Prodigal Son is a good example of this.

#### **Inter-Ethnic/Inter-Tribal Conflict- Rev. Debbie**

As was stated above, the workshop on this Sunday afternoon was devoted to addressing the huge problem of inter-tribal conflict that has seen the deaths of approximately 1400 people in 2009. First, Rev. Orozu read “Liwi-Oki Conflict” in the Murle language from *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 91-92). This was a story of a century-old ethnic conflict. The reading explained that children of each ethnic group were taught about the savagery of the other group. The story then introduces two Christian characters from opposing ethnic groups, Jonah and Bozon. The two figures find themselves at a conference together. After working together, they get to know each other, they find out that each other are Christians, and their communication begins to dispel their false ideas about the opposite s. After the reading of the story, Rev. Debbie asked the questions posed in the book. First, she asked the participants why Jonah and Bozon found it hard to believe that the other was a Christian. Those at the workshop responded:

- The two had been enemies for a long time.
- Their hearts were heavy.
- They had both been very accustomed to terrible stories of the opposing side.

Next, Rev. Debbie asked what other tribal members are going to think when they see Jonah and Bozon talking to each other.

- Maybe something good could come out of this.
- We can see God has come to help reconcile us.
- Perhaps there are good people in the other tribe.

Finally, Rev. Debbie asks the participants what they would advise the two characters to do if they wanted to bring the groups together.

- Pray and give advice.
- Advise that they need a mediator.
- Share ideas with their respective tribes, then come together.
- Create a type of peacemaking committee or organization.

At this point, Rev. Debbie told all those present to remember the plans they are coming up with, because these plans may also be implemented between the Murle and Nuer people. However, you should not necessarily wait for someone else to start mediation. Attacking such a large problem takes more than sharing ideas and praying.

Rev. Debbie then brought out a drawing of a tree representing conflict. The tree has many roots and many branches. First, she asked the participants what they thought some of the root causes of conflict were. As the responses came, she wrote them on individual roots on the tree. According to the participants, root causes included:

- Greed. (Rev. Debbie then has one of the men read James 4:3, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”)
- Need for cattle.
- Anger.
- Hunger.
- Vying for power.
- Immorality.
- Desire for children and wives.
- Abusive language.
- Lack of education and development.
- Rev. Debbie also added prejudice.

Rev. Debbie then spoke of some of the governmental reasons for conflict. First of all, she explained that the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) is young; and just as a child must grow and mature, so must a government. If the GoSS was strong, there would be no Murle-Nuer conflict, so we must see a weak government as a cause as well. There was much agreement among the participants. Rev. Debbie then continued by stating that there are also some people in powerful places who like to see violence and bloodshed, just like what was seen in Rwanda in the 1990s. Again, there was much agreement. One of the men in the workshop, backing the statement, said that there are certain elements in the government that are urging fighting between the Nuer, Dinka, and Murle.

Rev. Debbie continued along the same topic. She stated that those who want to see the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) fail love to see the south fighting itself, and they may be arming you and letting you fight yourselves. Things seem to have not changed much since the signing of the CPA was signed almost five years ago. It is clear that some people want to see the CPA fall apart, and they are not all northerners. Other people are also happy to hear of atrocities in places like Burmath and Lekwangole. In Lekwangole, the SPLA remained in their barracks during the attack, and the same order was heard in Burmath. Stories about the raids done by both the Murle and Nuer ethnic groups are equally bad. Christians from both sides are good people, but they are also all very defensive about their own ethnic group. It seems that nobody is ready to take the first step. The Gospel is all about reconciliation; so we, as Christians, must take the first step. It is not easy, and there is always a cost, but let us explore some of the things we can do. Rev. Debbie reverted attention back to the conflict tree chart and asked what some of the different kinds of conflict were. As the responses came, she wrote them out on the tree branches. Responses were:

- The Murle-Dinka conflict.
- The Murle-Nuer conflict.

- Age group fighting within the community.
- Fighting in the home.

Rev. Debbie pointed at the tree and stated that the tree of conflict gives poisonous, bitter fruit—fruit of pain, trauma, poor education, poor health, etc.

Rev. Debbie then broke the participants into groups to discuss and answer two questions:

- 1) Are there prejudices you have against the Nuer or Dinka through stories you have been told about them? What do you hear about other ethnic groups?
- 2) How are the Murle described by other ethnic groups? Why do they say these things?

The groups took turns to respond to the questions. First, the group led by Becky Obong responded:

- We are taught that these people are our enemies, and they started conflict by killing us. Cows brought conflict among us, and this brought misunderstanding. Whenever they meet us they kill us. This year the government tried peace. Many years ago sent a chief to try to bring peace, but they killed him. We fear that this will happen again.

Next, the group led by Rev. Orozu responded:

- The Dinkas are murderers, and we have been told they are cannibals. They change into animals at night. They have chicken feet on their foreheads.\* They have white legs because they are poor. They are also greedy. The Nuer have quick tempers. They are always ready to fight. They are people of yellow heads. They are cowards.
  - When asked if these things are true, the group responded that the cannibalism may not be true, but everything else was.
- The Dinka call us little vultures. The Nuer call us big, abnormal human beings. The Nuer also call us mud-eaters. It is true that we are a fairly big, uneducated people. It is also true that we can survive off of eating mud for a short period of time.



Rev. Debbie then asked the participants if any of them knew any Dinkas. She said that we should be careful not to stereotype all Dinkas. There are some Murles who are thieves, but you do not want to all be called thieves. Remember the village of storytelling on the “Journey of Unhealed Trauma.” Just as BBC or VOA feed us mostly bad news, I fear that bad news is all your various ethnic groups hear about each other. On the news, most of what I hear about the Murle is bad, but then I found out you were great when I met you. It is the same with the other groups around you who you are fighting with I cried when I had to leave Akobo because the Nuer were so nice. The fire of hatred against other groups is being fed by the news reports, and we must be very careful with our tongues. Isolation is part of the problem. If your ethnic groups

\* “...chicken feet on their foreheads” refers to the traditional scarring the Dinka people go through. .

were mixed together in communities and schools, you would discover that you are not so different. Rev. Debbie then asked if anyone wanted to add something that was not stated above. Peter Mama states that the Dinka call the Murle homeless wanderers. Rev. John Tubuwa adds that the Murle are called flesh-eating cannibals. Rev. Moses, the head of the church the workshop was conducted at, also added something. He said that the poor reactions by the Murle are due to poor education. He stated that the Dinka are “people of the tongue. They bring us children to buy, and we pay in cows. Then they say ‘the Murle are stealing our children.’ We react badly and attack the Dinka. Murle don’t know how to use the legal system, so we go take our cows back, then the cycle starts again. Yes we retaliate; we don’t let people stand on us. We take the law into our own hands.” At this point, Rev Debbie states that she defends the Murle to other people, and she does the same for the Nuer and Dinka when she hears stories that say all Murles, Dinkas, Nuer... are bad. She pointed out to the participants that we must remember the roots of conflict, and that some people want to see the fighting. Finally, Rev. Debbie had four Bible passages read: two by Rev. Moses and two by Peter Mama.

The first passage was Acts 10:34-35:

<sup>34</sup>Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism <sup>35</sup>but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Rev. Debbie explained that this passage shows that no group of people is favored in God’s eyes more than another group. God has children from all ethnic groups, and shows no partiality.

The second passage was Romans 13:1-2, 4:

<sup>1</sup>Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup>Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves...

<sup>4</sup>For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

After the reading of this passage, Rev. Debbie asked what this says about the role of the government in inter-ethnic fighting. A woman responded that the government should bring peace. Rev. Debbie agreed, and states that we should not take the law into our own hands.

The third passage was Matthew 10:29-31:

<sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Rev. Debbie explained that this verse means that we should take comfort in the knowledge that we are in God’s hands.

The final passage was Romans 12:19-21:

<sup>19</sup>Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

After this reading, Rev. Debbie stated to the participants that Jesus Christ does not take revenge, but reminded everyone that one day there will be justice.

## **DAY FIVE**

**Monday, 23 November**

The morning devotion used the biblical passage James 1:12-18:

<sup>12</sup>Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup>When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup>but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. <sup>15</sup>Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. <sup>16</sup>Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. <sup>17</sup>Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup>He chose to give us birth through the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

For the sake of time, the devotion was conducted in Murle with no translation.

### **Re-Cap of Sunday- Rev. Debbie**

Rev. Debbie started the workshop once again with a re-cap of what was learned the day before. The women were asked what they learned, and they responded:

- The church must lead the way to peace.
- Other tribes are not all bad. We should avoid stereotyping.
- A few bad people are "like a bad onion in the sack. It can make the others rotten."
- If we act humble and pray, God will put the rascals at bay.
- Harmony comes from the power of God. The woman who said this stated that during an earlier attack, the Christians isolated themselves and prayed, and there is peace for now.
- "People say we are fools because we are not educated. When we have to move, the hosting community becomes abusive. We are struggling and are called thieves. The government comes down hard on us. This workshop taught us education can bring justice and peace."
- Greed and confusion create conflict.
- We as women should pray and try to reach women in other communities. We also need to inform our men of what we have learned.
- "We need schools so we can fight with pen."
- If we fight among ourselves, violence will extend.
- "Revenge is not a good thing, we must use good words."

Rev. Debbie stated that she was very pleased with how much the women had learned, but she also told them that the best way to remember all of this is to teach it to others.

### **Abuse/Neglect of Children- Rev. Debbie & Becky Obong**

Rev. Debbie introduced the topic of abuse of abuse/neglect of children by linking a rise in domestic violence to the rise in violence from external sources. She went on to explain that violence against children may come from a family members or community members. Abuse and neglect can take the form of overworking children, speaking to them harshly, sexual abuse, or beatings. Rev. Debbie then inquired as to if the women had observed abuse and neglect of children in their communities. One woman replied that the community does not experience these things, but that was quickly overruled by the other participants. They stated that there are definitely people who do not take care of their own children, and there is rape by community members. Older women and men do go after young boys and girls. Children are beaten, and the women affirmed that the abuse has gone up with escalating conflict. However, the women did state that incest is unheard of in the community.



Next, Becky Obong recited some myths concerning sexual abuse of children, including:

1. Sexual abuse only happens to girls.
2. Most people who abuse children are mentally ill or slow.
3. Those who are abused are usually teenagers.
4. If we don't talk about the abuse they will forget about it.
5. Children often make up stories about being abused.
6. If a child was not beaten and an adult has sex with them, it means they wanted to have sex.
7. Victims of child abuse will not abuse other children.

An exercise was attempted concerning the women's beliefs of these myths. The exercise did not work the way it was planned, but the women seemed to have split beliefs about #5 and #6 above. Rev. Debbie corrected this by telling the women that children rarely make up stories of sexual abuse, and a child should *never* be blamed for sexual abuse. Rev. Debbie then asked the women if they knew any ways to pick out a child who has been sexually abused through his/her actions. The women responded in the following ways:

- "A girl will always want to talk to and be with boys. This is how we can find one who was sexually abused."
- "I have a small girl and I saw a boy go with her to the church. The boy tried to take off her clothes. Her brother bit the boy. She told me, and I told the mother of the boy to take care of her son."
- A few women cited behavior changes and displays of fear.

At this point Rev. Debbie asked how many women have seen signs of abuse. A few of the women raised their hands. Rev. Debbie then continued by listing off a number of other signs of sexually abused children.

Becky then introduced some strategies to help children prevent abuse. She first asked what the women were currently doing in this respect. The women responded:

- The church must help.
- We tell the children what they should do and who they shouldn't be with.
- We tell our children not to go to the traditional dances.
- We give our children advice. We discipline them—setting times for them to be home, etc.
- We teach them to dress modestly.

Becky, along this last point, asked the women how a child should dress and behave. The women responded that their children should not be naked. They stated that girls should be taught about underwear and how to dress. Rev. Debbie then summarized "6 Things Children Should Know to Help Prevent Sexual Abuse," which was found in a distributed handout. (Appendix E). She further explained that there are three key words to know:

- 1) Stop what is happening.
- 2) Go and run away.
- 3) Tell someone who believes you.

Rev. Debbie went on to state that if a child is abused, the child must be protected, and the abuse must be reported to the authorities. The child should be asked to try to explain what happened. The child may need to draw a picture and explain the picture. The child's play should also be supervised in order to notice behavioral changes.

### **Traditional Responses: What to Keep and What to Change- Rev. Debbie**

The participants were then asked to get back into their groups. Each group was given a series of situations and asked to discuss and share what would traditionally be done to address the

problem. As a whole, the participants would then decide if the traditional practice should be kept or changed according to what they had learned. Below are a list of the groups, situations, traditional practices, and thoughts concerning whether or not the practice should be kept or changed.

#### Group 1 (led by Peter Mama)

Traditionally, what would happen if:

- A child was beaten seriously, bruised and bleeding?
  - Elders and neighbors come together and have a trial with the child and suspect. A fine may be paid, and the maternal uncle may take the child.
  - It was decided that this was a good practice.
- A child is sexually abused?
  - A case is opened in the same manner. If the girl is grown up, you ask the man to marry her; however, strangers do not marry.
  - It was decided that this is mostly good, but the girl should not have to marry her rapist.
- A child is not well cared-for?
  - The family is scolded/rebuked by other family members and/or the community. The community can look after the child.
  - This is good.
- A girl is made pregnant by a family member?
  - The girl must be separated from the family. Relatives cannot marry one another. If they want to marry, a black dog must be slaughtered to signify the family split. There is no punishment given.
  - The black dog ritual and lack of punishment are not good.

#### Group 2 (led by Becky Obong)

Traditionally, what would happen if:

- A woman is beaten close to death?
  - The woman's brother and parents and elders come to ask what is wrong. If the wife is in the wrong, the parents pay a cow. If the husband is wrong, he pays a cow. She cannot leave home unless the beating continues. If it does, then the father can take her. The father or the court can take the woman out of the home, or the father may stay with the woman for a while.
  - It is good that the culture protects the woman.
- What would happen to the children?
  - They can stay with their mother.
  - It is good that the culture protects the child.
- A woman is raped by a community leader?
  - A case can be opened and the rapist pays a fine. The mother is counseled. If pregnancy occurs, the child stays with the mother.
  - This is good.

#### Group 3 (led by Rev. Orozu)

Traditionally, what would happen if:

- A woman is abducted, then returns not pregnant?
  - There is much joy. A goat is slaughtered for her. There is much community support/encouragement.
  - This is good.
- A woman is abducted and comes back pregnant? What happens to the child?

- Both the woman and child are accepted with open arms. There is much joy.
- This is good.
- The tribe wanted to make peace with a tribe being fought?
  - The leader sends two representatives to the opposing community to ask for peace. If it is agreed, both communities send representatives with a bull. The bulls are slaughtered, and a spear is broken and buried.
  - This is good; however, it led to some angering memories.
    - There was a 23 year peace with the Jie people which broke due to alleged Dinka instigation of the Jie people against the Murle.
    - Apparently, there was a time when there was a peace with the Nuer people, but it broke down when the Murle chief sent for peace was killed by the SPLA. Chief Nganto Kavola, of Lekwangole, tried peace again in 2007, but the Nuer attacked the village of Nyergang before peace could be realized.

#### Group 4 (led by Rev. John Tubuwa)

Traditionally, what would happen if:

- Abducted children returned home?
  - The community would be overjoyed. A bull is slaughtered.
  - This is good.
- Your village returns from a cattle raid with abducted children?
  - Elders scorn “bringing in another culture,” and the children are brought to the government. But sometimes the children are raised as equals in the community.
    - A story is told of a Gummuruk preacher, Jacob Konyi, who had brothers who had abducted children. Jacob forced them to return the children.
  - The children should be returned.
- Are there traditional ways of exchanging abducted children?
  - In 1989 there was an exchange in Pibor between the Murle and Nuer.

After the discussion on traditional practices, it was time for the women to brainstorm ways they could help alleviate tribal, community, and domestic violence. The participants split into four groups to come up with resolutions for themselves and recommendations for others.

## **DAY SIX**

**Tuesday, 24 November**

### **Group Presentations**

The day started immediately with groups giving presentations of their resolutions and recommendations. The group led by Becky Obong addressed domestic and community violence, and the groups led by Rev. Orozu, Peter Mama, and Rev. John Tubuwa addressed inter-ethnic conflict.

#### Group led by Becky Obong

- We will tell our husbands and sons not to raid other villages.
- Girls and boys will be sent to school.
- We promise to send a letter to the Nuer women to try to make peace.
- We will not accept stolen cattle.
- We will stop cultural attitudes that fuel violence.

- We will stop denying education for girls and boys.
- We will talk to community leaders to allow women to take part in the process of peace and reconciliation.
- We promise to talk to the men about non-violence, anger-management, and how to be a good husband.
- We promise to learn to communicate better with each other in order to help the reconciliation process.
- We will educate our husbands and children about trauma healing.
- We will report abductions to the chiefs, who will bring reports to the government.

Group led by Rev. Orozu

- We promise to pray to God to bring peace between us and our neighbors.
- We will talk to our sons and husbands about stopping raiding.
- We will send a letter to the Nuer women to set up a time to meet to discuss peace between communities.
- We will teach trauma healing to families and community members.
- Abductions will be reported to the authorities.
- We will not accept stolen cows.
- Education for all will be discussed.

Group led by Peter Mama

- We promise to try to bring church leaders from Dinka, Nuer, and Murle communities to discuss peace. Women will be involved and should get together.
- We need Rev. Debbie to help bring Nuer and Murle women together. Pibor would be a good place for this.
- We request that the U.S. UNMIS disarmament teams to Akobo, Bor, and Pibor. UNMIS has failed, and must finish the job. America needs to press UNMIS to come back.



Group led by Rev. Rev. John Tubuwa

- In December, we will husbands and sons to instruct them not to abduct and raid.

- Chiefs and men must come to Gummuruk. Through this meeting, we will try to set up a meeting between the warring tribes.
- We will request the three commissioners to provide security for wherever we meet.
- We will send a message to Akobo and Bor to also stop abductions and raids.

Rev. Debbie then asked for additional recommendations. Rev. John Tubuwa stated that there had been killings between the Nuer and Murle on May 15. The attack occurred between Gummuruk and Pibor. He added that members of the army were actually part of the attack. He said that the army was killing, not protecting. After this, there was a short discussion about possibly sending a letter to the government concerning security. It was decided that Rev. Orozu could do this for the women eventually.

Time was then taken for the women to compose a letter in response to the letter from Akobo. The women dictated, and Rev. Orozu wrote the letter in English. The letter can be found as Appendix F.

Finally, after compiling the resolutions and recommendations, Rev. Debbie listed them off to the participants to make sure they all agreed with them. Everyone agreed with them. The resolutions and recommendations can be found as Appendix G.

### **Closing Ceremony**

The closing ceremony started with a prayer, song, and Bible reading. The reading was Romans 14:19:

<sup>19</sup>Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

There was then a speech given by one of the women. She exclaimed how happy and proud she was to be a part of the workshop. She said that they had all been ignorant and had lacked understanding, but they are now full of praise. They had learned much. The love of Jesus Christ had brought the workshop to Gummuruk, and they were thankful.

Next, each of the facilitators gave very short speeches displaying thanks to and pride of the women and all they had accomplished.

Pastor Moses, the leader of the church, then gave a short speech. He said that he sends his greetings to America, and that we should depart with 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28:

<sup>23</sup>May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. <sup>25</sup>Brothers, pray for us. <sup>26</sup>Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. <sup>27</sup>I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. <sup>28</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.



He ended by assuring the group from RECONCILE that the teachings would be put into practice. He prayed that the plans they had come up with ushered the way for reconciliation. Finally, certificates of completion of the workshop were distributed to the participants, much to their joy.

## **PIBOR WORKSHOP**

### **DAY ONE**

**Wednesday, 25 November**

The workshop started out with a devotional by Rev. David. The devotional included a Gospel reading: John 16:6-8:

<sup>6</sup>Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. <sup>7</sup>But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup>When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

The Reverend requested that the women open their hearts up to the teachings of the workshop, which are a blessing from above.

### **Greetings, Opening Remarks, Introductions**

Rev. Debbie followed the opening devotional with some welcoming remarks. She stated that RECONCILE was aware of the terrible news that has come out of the Pibor area in recent months – the inter-ethnic violence. Now, due to the requests coming from the women of Pibor, a workshop was being held for women concerning women's issues. Rev. Debbie told the participants that there were many people supporting the workshop in their prayers including Presbyterian women in the United States, who held a special offering to help make this possible. She also acknowledged some of the men who attended the opening ceremony, and asked them to attend the segments of the workshop devoted to syphilis and inter-ethnic conflict, as well as the closing ceremony.

Introductions were then conducted. Becky Obong, Lagu John Julius, Nathan Magrath, Rev. Debbie Braaksma, Rev. John Tubuwa, and Rev. Orozu Lokine all introduced themselves, followed by individual introductions by all of the participants.

### **Expectations, Overview, Rules**

Becky Obong then asked the women what their expectations were for the workshop. The women responded in the following ways:

- We cannot know what to expect.
- We will ask God to bring peace with your help.
- We want someone to teach us God's ways. We need training in how to live in our homes.
- Teach us how to reconcile and make peace.

- Encourage one another and humble ourselves.
- We expect an explanation as to why we suffer from disease, especially syphilis.
- You will help with peace, then help will come for health and education.
- We are glad to listen and learn from other women.
- We expect to learn the word of God so that we may have life, instead of sickness and fighting.
- I have been through much, but have felt restrained by men. Now I feel I can be open and share what is in my heart. I am young and have left my family. I want to know why I have done this, and now I know we can learn about the word of God.
- I expect to learn as much as I learned through you last year. Our lives at home are not good. We are not living godly family lives. If life at home is destroyed, then life is not good. We expect advice.
- How should a woman care for her children?
- Sometimes we think God is not here in Africa but is with the white people. We are glad to see teachings coming from abroad.

Rev. Debbie then explained what was going to be covered over the week of the workshop, including:

- What the rights of women and children are, and what the Bible says about those rights.
- What trauma does to us and our communities.
- How to help those hurt by trauma.
- How to help stop inter-tribal fighting, and what the Bible says about this.
- We will look at how culture deals with violence.
- We will make plans for what we can do as women to help prevent domestic and inter-tribal conflict.

Next, some general guidelines were established for the workshop. Rev. Debbie first asked for some ideas from the participants. A woman responded that we should respect one another, keep silent when others are talking, and not laugh at each other. Another woman added that everyone should try to be on time. Rev. Debbie added that hands should be raised if you wish to speak, and that all confidential matters divulged by participants should not leave the workshop.

### **Preconceptions of the Workshop Participants**

Rev. Debbie proceeded to conduct an activity to measure the women's preconceptions of their rights. For this exercise, Rev. Debbie made a statement pertaining to what women should or shouldn't be able to do. If the women agreed with the statement, they would stand in one place. If they disagreed, they would stand opposite of those who agreed. Following are the statements, the numbers of those who agreed/disagreed with the



statements, and the reasoning the women gave for either agreeing or disagreeing.\*

- 1) Women's work should only include cooking and digging.
  - a. Number of those who agreed: 34
    - i. Reasons: This is just what we are supposed to do.
    - ii. We do not have any education, so what else are we supposed to do?
  - b. Number of those who disagreed: 25
    - i. Reasons: We don't like cooking and digging anymore. Our husbands are lazy. We should be able to do other work.
    - ii. We need education and training.
- 2) Women do not need money because they do not know how to use it.
  - a. Agree: 17
    - i. We can work with our own hands.
    - ii. Men are the responsible people.
  - b. Disagree: 37
    - i. We are the ones taking care of the children, so we need money.
- 3) Men do not have the right to beat women.
  - a. Agree: 17
    - i. Beating is hatred.
  - b. Disagree: 37
    - i. Men married us, so they have the right to beat us.
    - ii. My father gave me to my husband, so he has ownership of me.
- 4) If a woman is married, and the bride-price has been paid, she must never leave, even if she is beaten almost to death.
  - a. Agree: 29
    - i. He is correcting me, I must stay.
  - b. Disagree: 29
    - i. We are human beings with rights, such as the right to move.
- 5) A woman should not speak to her husband like a friend. She must show him more respect.
  - a. Agree: 59
  - b. Disagree: 0
- 6) If a woman is beaten, the Bible says we should be patient and accept what has happened. As Christians, we must suffer like this.
  - a. Agree: 63
  - b. Disagree: 0
- 7) Women should never report beatings to the tribal authorities.
  - a. Agreed: 34
    - i. The husband has a certain amount of ownership. All Murle women are beaten.
  - b. Disagree: 1
    - i. A wife should not be treated like a child.
- 8) Women should have the right to choose the man they marry.
  - a. Agree: 6
    - i. I have a right for my own life
  - b. Disagree: 35

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\* Note that there is not equal participation in answering each question. This is due to confusion over some questions, possibly due to the nature of the statement or the translation of the statement.

- i. Parents must be responsible and make the right choice for us.

### **Women's Rights and the Rights of a Child**

After conclusion of the preconception exercise, Rev. Debbie introduced the women to a brief history of the council that put together the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She explained that the rights are what every person in the world is entitled to, including women and children. Rev. Debbie went on to explain that many people in the world learn about these rights in school, and that many families are familiar with them. Unfortunately, the Murle women have been cheated of education, so Becky will share these rights with you. At this point, Becky summarized the rights compiled by Rev. Debbie. These rights of women and children can be found in Appendices A & B.

After recitation of the rights by Becky, Rev. Debbie asked the participants what they had learned from these rights. The women responded that they had learned that they have the right to ask their husbands for things that they want, that marriage should be something that is discussed, and that women and men have equal rights to children. Rev. Debbie then clearly re-stated some of the rights, including rights pertaining to work, education, marriage, children, and safety. She then moved on to the rights of children and repeated these as well. It was discovered that most of these rights were new concepts to the women.

Next, the women were split into five groups, and each group was assigned a specific right pertaining to women or children. Each group was to discuss the assigned right, talk about where in their lives they saw situations pertaining to the right, and then they were asked to either tell a story or conduct a drama showcasing the right or violation thereof. The following is a list of the groups, the right they were assigned, and what was presented:

- First group (led by Rev. John Tubuwa)
  - Child cruelty (Principle 9 in Appendix C)
  - A woman told a story. A child's parents had died, and so another wife took care of the child. The wife had much work to do, especially with the new duties, and the child was given much work as well. The child would get burned by the food she was forced to prepare.
- Second group (led by Becky)
  - Women's right to work and education.
  - A drama was performed. There was a girl with a friend of the same age. The girl was taken to school by her father, while the friend was forced to work at the cattle camp. The friend was then given away for marriage as the main character was able to finish school and find a job. The friend cried when she saw the main character's success, and the main character gave her a gift. The friend's parents were regretful.
- Third group (co-led by Maria and Nathan)
  - Violence against women.
  - A drama was performed. A wife brings her husband some water, but the husband says the cup is dirty, so the wife gets beaten. She then brings food, but the food is too hot, so she gets beaten and is told to get bath water because the husband is now



sweating from the food. The wife then cuts grass to thatch the roof. The husband refuses to help her, but orders her to get him more water. The wife says she is too tired, so she gets beaten.

- Rev. Debbie points out that the beating is occurring for no reason.
- Fourth group (led by Lagu John)
  - Children's Principle #4 plus education.
  - A drama is performed. Cows are being herded. The cows are sick, so the farmer goes to a Kenyan veterinarian to get medicine. The vet refuses to supply medicine to a farmer who does not send his kids to school. Instead, the vet buys the cows from the farmer using money the vet's educated son has made.
  - Rev. Debbie points out the importance of school, and reminds the participants that daughters must attend school as well.
- Fifth group (led by Rev. Orozu)
  - Women's marriage rights.
  - A drama is performed. A daughter is given away to marriage against her will, after the daughter wanted to be with another boy. The girl runs off and hangs herself.
  - Rev. Debbie states that this type of suicide appears to be common in the area (there were three in the past year in Pibor). She then formed a committee to discover how many such suicides have happened in the past three years. The group would later report that there had been at least five cases of suicide in the past three years related to forced marriage.
  - A woman named Martha informed that the problem of forced marriage actually appears to be becoming more generational, and is slowly dissipating, but that the suicides definitely still happen.

## **DAY TWO**

**Thursday, 26 November**

The second day started with a devotional conducted by Rev. David. The scripture reading was John 4:23-24:

<sup>23</sup>Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The short message explained that the right person is the person who can follow God's word.

### **Re-Cap of Wednesday**

Rev. Debbie started the workshop by asking the women what they had learned the previous day. The women responded in the following ways:

- "I was ignorant. I have learned that a woman who sends [a] child to school is a good woman... I have been thinking about this all night."
- "I learned to give the daughter a choice for a partner." The woman also mentioned that this has not been happening, and has ended in suicide a few times.
- "We, as women, have the right to education and to be in the offices."
- If I do not speak harshly to my husband he will not beat me.
- "If we go to school we can take part in government."
- I learned about the rights of women and their equality to men.
- "I was very happy all night. If I could be born again I would go to school."

- “We as Murle are like prisoners. If we had education we could be like others in the world.”
- We must be kind to our children, even when they are stubborn.
- Women must report beatings to the police.
- “We have to be patient and persevere.”
- Learned about child neglect.

### **Biblical Teachings**

The participants were split into the five groups once again. Each group was given a passage from the Bible and was instructed to discuss it, and then report the meaning to the workshop participants as a whole.

- First group (led by Rev. Joseph)
  - Matthew 5:22  
<sup>22</sup>But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.
  - A woman reported that the passage means children must be treated well. Don't speak to them in a rough, demeaning manner.
  - Rev. Debbie made sure to point out that the passage applies to all people, not only children.
- Second group (co-led by Maria and Nathan)
  - 1 Peter 3:7  
<sup>7</sup>Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.
  - A woman reported that the passage means that husbands and wives should love one another. Husbands should treat their wives in a good way, and not beat them with a special stick hung for display. They should live together in love. Women should also love husbands. There must be mutual respect. Spouses should live in fear of God, and love each other through this fear.
- Third group (led by Lagu John)
  - 1 Timothy 5:8  
<sup>8</sup>If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
  - A woman reported that this passage means that a husband must take care of his family very well. If he doesn't do this, he is considered worse than an unbeliever.
- Fourth group (led by Becky)
  - Also 1 Timothy 5:8
  - The group conducted a drama. There were two wives: one was hospitable and provided for everyone, the other was not. The first wife was blessed because of her kindness shown to everybody, as is suggested in the passage.



- Fifth group (led by Rev. John Tubuwa)

- Proverbs 31:16-18, 24

<sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. <sup>17</sup> She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. <sup>18</sup> She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.

<sup>24</sup> She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.

- A woman reported that this passage means that a woman has the right to own land, which will produce for her family. Profits can help provide for the children and husband. Women can be in profitable trade.

After the groups finished reporting their findings, Rev. Debbie brought back the passage 1 Peter 3:7. She stated that husbands and wives must respect each other. They must be able to talk to each other as friends. “Many of you said men have the right to beat wives, but can you beat someone you respect? No.”

### Trauma and its Effects

Next on the agenda was a discussion concerning what trauma is, and what effects trauma has on a person. Rev. Orozu started by reading “The Story of John Mba,” in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 20-21). The story is about a family caught in the middle of a rebel soldier attack. During the attack, the husband/father was caught, and his arm was cut off. The remainder of the story discusses how John, his wife Mary, and his son are affected by trauma caused by the attack. Becky then asked the questions posed after the story in the book. First, she asked what wounds John was carrying, apart from his physical wounds. The women responded:

- John began to worry too much.
- He was always thinking about his one arm.
- He had pain in his heart.
- His faith declined.
- He had nightmares.
- He became violent.
- He became jumpy.

Becky then asked about Mary. The women responded that she had become disturbed, was having nightmares, and was no longer happy.

At this point, without prompting, the women started to share stories with the group about what they had personally been through.

A woman recalled when her family was in Malakal. The town was attacked, and they ran and boarded a steamer boat. The boat was attacked by the SPLA. Some people jumped into the

river, others were too scared. She started praying to God. She saw many dead bodies. The boat was fired upon repeatedly. She could see dead bodies when she tried to sleep. Fortunately, she was able to get enough prayer and church support until the nightmares went away.

Another woman had a son who she took to school. Her husband took the child out of school to help tend to the cattle. The SPLA attacked Pibor and captured the boy's uncle. The son told the troops to take him instead, and so they did. He was trained as a soldier. The SPLA eventually came back to Pibor. Her son was put on the front line. He was shot and killed. The woman stated that if her son had remained in school this would not have happened. She said that her brother died as well, and now she is constantly thinking about both of them.

Another woman told a story of her escape from the brutal Lekwangole attack in March by Nuer. Her relatives were massacred, and everyone was scattered. She said that a few of them now live in Pibor. She stated that whenever she sees the Nuer marks (scarification on the head), her heart turns and she cannot stand to see them. She claimed that the Nuer were the same soldiers who were supposed to be protectors in the SPLA.

Another woman was actually a Nuer. She said that her husband had taken her to Murleland, but her husband was killed by Arab soldiers during the civil war. She could not sleep at night. She could sometimes see him, but she knew he was not there. She felt lonely and had suicidal thoughts, but a Christian family took her in.

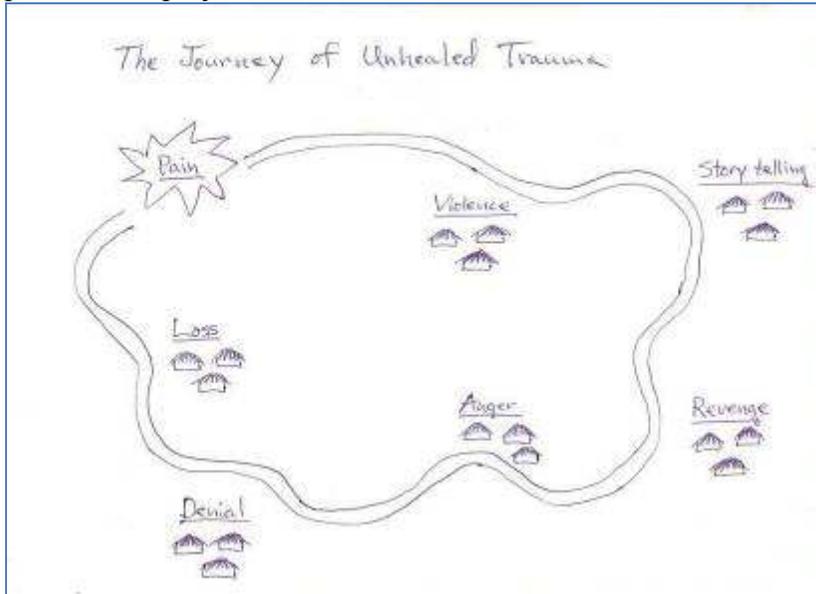
At this point the stories stopped and the conversation was redirected back to the questions concerning the short story from the book. Becky asked how the boy was affected by the incident. The women responded that he was no longer normal. He had become a drunkard, and was no longer the great teacher he once was. Becky then asked what the Murle culture tells us to do when we are suffering inside. The women responded the extended family may come to help, but that the problems of others are largely ignored, and that some may commit suicide. Men may consider exacting revenge, but they cannot cry, and they cannot talk to friends about their pain. The women must treat the man until he is better. On the other hand, a woman is allowed to cry and talk to friends.

Rev. Debbie then continued to explain the effects of trauma by bringing out a chart displaying a chart of pictures for those who cannot read. Each section of the chart displayed a way in which trauma affects a person, and these were explained. She also demonstrated trauma through the use of two cups of water. She explained that the cups symbolized a person full of life. When a traumatic event happens, the cups of water smash together, and some of a person's life spills out. These events can make a person feel empty, and we may feel as though we cannot go on. Lagu John gave an example of a personal traumatic experience, when his refugee camp was attacked by the LRA. He stated that he witnessed the murder of two people during the attack, and his thinking became very confused because of it. Rev. Debbie also gave an example by telling a story of when the Somali Shifta people attacked her and her husband's home in Kenya. Rev. Debbie and her husband were both affected in different ways.

### **Two Possible Paths to Take after Trauma**

At this point, Rev. Debbie explained that there are two paths that can be taken by a person after a traumatic event has taken place. One path is the "Journey of Unhealed Trauma," and the other is the "Trauma Healing Journey."

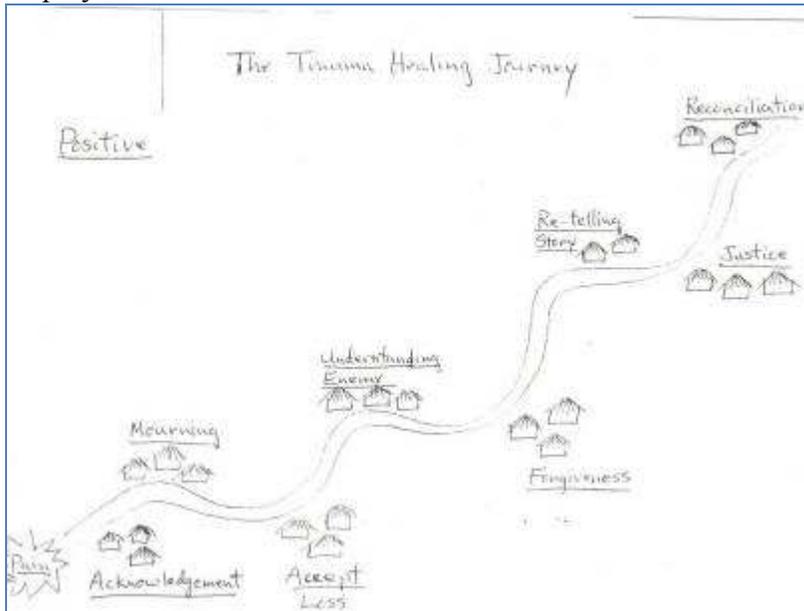
Rev. Debbie first presented the “Journey of Unhealed Trauma.” A chart showing a picture of the path was displayed at the front of the venue:



**The Journey of Unhealed Trauma**

There are six villages along this road: the villages of ‘loss,’ ‘denial,’ ‘anger,’ ‘revenge,’ ‘story-telling,’ and ‘violence.’ Rev. Debbie placed special emphasis on the ‘story-telling’ aspect of the cycle, stating that every tribe tells a story in which it is no more than a victim, and the other tribe is always in the wrong. Rev. Debbie stated that it appears that this is the path that has revealed itself through the Murle and Nuer conflict. She asked how many women in the room had known someone who was killed or abducted. Twenty women raised their hands. One woman said her uncle had three children abducted from his family.

Next, Rev. Debbie introduced the “Trauma Healing Journey.” A chart displaying this path was displayed:



**The Trauma Healing Journey**

It was explained that this is not an easy journey, and can be thought of as an up-hill climb. The “villages” along this path are the villages of ‘acknowledgment,’ ‘mourning,’ ‘acceptance,’ ‘understanding enemy,’ ‘forgiveness,’ ‘re-telling story,’ ‘justice,’ and finally ‘reconciliation.’ Each village was addressed and explained. Again, the ‘story-telling’ was stressed, but this time the story should be a true story. To explain this, Rev. Debbie used the example of a conference between the Nuer and Dinka tribes sponsored by the New Sudan Council of Churches. During this conference, both sides told their stories to each other, and these stories were merged into one comprehensive true story. She explained that we should be able to advance to the ‘justice’ village on our own, but true ‘reconciliation’ must include leaders who can take us this far. However, there are leaders who may prefer to see people on the wrong path. One woman affirmed this by stating that there are some young people who pay leaders cows in order to gain permission to raid.

### **Helping People Affected by Trauma**

The workshop then moved into a discussion as to how we can help people affected by trauma. Rev. Debbie explained that we can take our pain to God. The Psalms are an excellent example of this. David shared his pain with God through songs of lament. Crying is also acceptable. We should also allow people to let out their pain through talking about it. It is easy to give advice, but it is more important to be a good listener. Rev. Debbie presented some listening skills, including some guiding questions displayed in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 29). She explained that there were some questions to help let the pain out, and other questions to help the victim feel like a survivor. One woman, Ruth, displayed these good listening skills with Rev. Orozu, while the other women watched.

Rev. Debbie then explained that stress caused by trauma can be felt physically as well. To finish off the day, she had the women practice some ways to alleviate these physical symptoms, including dancing, a breathing exercise, a muscle tensing and relaxing exercise, and massaging.



### **DAY THREE**

**Friday, 27 November**

Opening devotion on the third day of the workshop was delivered by Maria. The Bible passage she used was Matthew 7:7:

<sup>7</sup>"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Maria explained that we must ask God for what we need through prayer. We must knock before the door is opened, and we must seek in order to find. She stated that this workshop was an answer to the seeking and asking.

### **Re-Cap of Thursday**

Rev. Debbie asked the participants what they had learned the previous day. The women responded in the following ways.

- How the church can help with trauma.
- How to deal with the emotional and physical effects of trauma.
- We must let the pain out through another person.
- Learned about reconciliation instead of revenge and violence.
- Taking care of children in a loving and compassionate manner.
- Learned about the cycle of violence.
- The story of John and Mary is reflected in our community.
- “We as women need to send our children to school. We live as though we are in prison.”
- Don’t push down the anger of trauma. We must let it out with a friend.

### **Rape in the Community**

Rape was then addressed. Rev. Orozu told “The Story of Ama” in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill, Miersma and Baggé 51-52). It was a story about a woman who was raped by foreign troops, her subsequent silence on the issue, and the pregnancy and eventual birth of a son due to it. After the reading of the story, Becky asked the women what rape was. The women responded that it was sex without consent, and an abuse of power. Becky explained that both women and children can be raped. She then asked the participants what the effects of rape could be. The women responded that the woman could feel angry, ashamed, not satisfied with sex with her husband, disagreement with her husband, and could even lead to eventual suicide. Becky continued the questions by asking if any of the women knew anyone who was raped in the community. This led to a series of stories:

- One woman said she was raped when she was a young girl. A young boy had raped her, and she still has nightmares because of it.
- Another woman said she was raped as an adult. Her husband had died, and her late husband’s friend called for her. He locked her in his bedroom. She was able to resist by tightly squeezing his genitals and then running away. She still fears the man.
- Another woman said her story was similar, but she was not able to resist. She said that she had lost many young children, so when she gave birth again, she went to a traditional priest to try to save the child. The woman was taken to a holy goat, and that night the priest prayed for her. He then raped her. She still feels the pain of the event, and the child eventually died anyway. The woman then revealed that this was the first time she had told this story to anyone.
- Another woman said that after her husband had died, a tribal chief came to console her, and told her to find him if she ever needed anything. When she went to get help from him, he told her to wait in his house. Just as he was about to rape her another woman walked in. The chief got off of her and she ran away.

Becky then asked them about their daughters. A woman responded that many women believed their daughters had been raped, but the daughters would not say anything. Another woman told the story of her own daughter. Her daughter was brought to the forest and was raped. When she became pregnant, her and her rapist were forced to get married. The woman told the group that she still ached in her heart from the whole ordeal.

After this story, Becky asked how the women would personally react if they themselves were raped. The women responded that they would probably keep quiet. They would fear that if they were to tell, their husbands would murder the rapists. A woman told another story. There was an SPLA attack on Pibor in 1987 in which the woman's child died. The woman's breasts swelled from too much milk. She went to the clinic and was treated by her uncle's son. She then went to collect firewood for him in the forest. In the forest she met four SPLA soldiers. One held her down while another raped her. She cried, but was unable to tell her uncle's son. When the Government of Sudan militia captured Pibor from the SPLA, she was very happy. She praised the militia leader.



Becky then asked the women how they thought rape affected the rapist. A woman suggested that maybe he feels powerful. Becky then read a passage from *Healing the Wounds of Trauma*, "Soldiers who rape often feel proud of what they have done, but the violence they do to others also kills something inside of them..." (Hill, Hill, Miersma and Baggé 55).

Next, Becky asked what the women thought they should do to help someone who has been raped. The women responded that they would tell her to forgive, but also tell her she is not in the wrong. They would pray with her and comfort her, and they would also take her to the clinic. This led Becky to her next point: medical treatment. Becky stressed the necessity of post-rape medical treatment, and summarized what the book had to say on this as well (Hill, Hill and Baggé 55).

Rev. Debbie then stated that there were two things she would like to emphasize:

- 1) A woman should never blame herself for rape. The person who was wrong is always the person who rapes.
- 2) Reporting rape cases is extremely important. Women are can be fearful of telling someone because the rapists are often in powerful positions (military, chiefs, teachers, etc.). But if there is no report, the problem could grow. The government is not very strong yet, but there are still steps that can be taken. Areas that report rape and take action tend to have smaller numbers of rapes; whereas places that hide rape tend to have a growing problem.

Rev. Debbie asked what a Murle man would typically do if his wife is raped. The women responded that he would fight the rapist. The relationship between the husband and wife typically remains strong, so reporting to the husband is encouraged. Rev. Debbie then reminded the participants that we must take time to actively listen to a woman who is traumatized so she can release her pain, as was discussed the previous day.

As a matter of discovering more about rape cases in the area, Rev. Debbie then asked if the story of the religious leader raping the woman is typical. A woman said that it was, and that it was the traditional practice. A woman who is too old may not “be blessed” by the leader. The religious leader will take ashes and touch a woman’s breasts to test their firmness. This practice will determine if a woman is eligible for a “blessing.” If the woman is eligible, she will rub his urine on herself. He will then “bless” her genital area.

### **Syphilis: Symptoms, Treatment, Prevention**

Syphilis has been rumored to be a widespread problem in the Pibor area. Some local reports suggest that the disease has hampered reproduction, and has subsequently led to a rise in child abductions and premature marriages of young girls. Lagu John Julius, a health education consultant from Yei, joined the RECONCILE facilitation team to help educate the Pibor women on the problem. Due to the cross-sex nature of the problem, the men of the community were invited to this segment of the workshop as well.



Lagu started talking about syphilis by explaining what it was exactly. He explained that it is known as the “great imitator,” due to its shared symptoms with other diseases and ailments. Syphilis is transmitted through sexual acts and direct contact, but also can be spread to a baby during pregnancy. Lagu explained some of the symptoms of syphilis using an easy-to-read picture chart of a human.

The men and women were asked if they knew any ways to stop the disease. Both men and women expressed that they should remain faithful to their partners. Lagu then presented another chart and proceeded to explain other ways to prevent the spread of the disease, including couples testing, faithfulness, safe sex education, and condom use.\* Lagu also pointed out that the practice of polygamy can also exacerbate the problem.

The men left at the conclusion of the syphilis segment.

### **Domestic Violence**

The next segment addressed the problem of domestic violence. Rev. Debbie introduced the topic by stating that the Bible says a husband and wife should respect each other. Discussions, not beatings, should take place between spouses. Rev. Orozu then read “John and Anna: A Story of Domestic Violence” in *Rethinking Domestic Violence* (Naker and Michau 58). The short story tells the tale of a woman, Anna, who is beaten often by her husband, John. Anna is told that she must work hard to make up for the dowry paid. Her work is exploited by John. John often uses her money to go drinking at night, and he will beat her for the smallest reasons, mostly to prove to everyone that he is the boss of the house. After the telling of the story, Rev. Debbie asked if such a story could happen in Pibor. The women responded yes, and Rev. Debbie stated that it happened everywhere, but more so in places affected by war. She said that the Nuer women of Akobo experienced a rise in domestic violence as the Nuer/Murle conflict intensified; the women in Pibor agreed that the same thing was happening in their own community.

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\* It was discovered later that the MSF clinic in Pibor does not supply condoms.

Rev. Debbie then explained that there is a cycle of violence that can happen in the household. The cycle starts with violence, in which a man loses control and beats the woman. The woman becomes frightened, and may even run away. This is followed by a period of calm. There may be peace for a while, and the situation may cool down.\* However, tension eventually builds again. The woman becomes fearful again, and starts to act defensive. Something may eventually snap, and the cycle will start again.

Rev. Debbie then explained what should be done in a case like Anna's. She reminded the participants that often hard for a woman to speak of the violence, and that the violence may be worse than what is being reported. Violence may be physical or sexual. At this point the women wanted to make sure it was understood that fathers do not "play sex" with their daughters; however, beatings are common. Branching off from this point, Rev. Debbie explained that if a mother is being beaten, it must be remembered that the children may be being beaten as well. In addition to this, children simply living in these types of home situations tend to have problems: physically, mentally, behaviorally, and emotionally. A woman will often put up with the violence for three reasons:

- 1) She wants to keep the family together.
- 2) She needs the man's financial support.
- 3) She may love him, even when he beats her.

With this being the case, we must be sure that the woman is kept safe and the man is stopped. The woman must understand she is not deserving of the beating.

Rev. Debbie then went on to talk about the difference between righteous suffering and needless suffering as Christians. She explained that the Bible says we must suffer for righteousness' sake, such as what Jesus did. God did not mean for women to suffer unjust harm. We should not deceive ourselves by claiming it is God's will that we persevere and endure through beatings.

### **Stopping Domestic Violence**

Given that there is a problem of domestic violence in the Pibor community, the next section of the workshop covered how to put an end to such violence. Rev. Debbie explained that there are three things that must be done:

- 1) The woman and children must be protected from the violence. The woman should be asked if it is safe to return home. If it is not, a plan must be made to protect her. The participants in the workshop did mention that the elders can take a woman to their homes to protect her.
- 2) The man must be stopped from continuing the beatings. The women of the workshop said the elders can help in pursuing this as well.
- 3) If points 1 and 2 are successfully met there can be an attempt at getting the husband and wife back together again. God does not like divorce, but we live in a broken world. Some men cannot break out of the cycle of violence; others take years. Unfortunately, sometimes marriage needs to end.

Rev. Debbie then moved into how to break the cycle of violence. She explained that the man must first confess that he has a problem. He must not blame her for what he has been doing. A woman then stood and said that Murle culture states that the man is always right, and the woman is wrong. Rev. Debbie stated that in that case, the church must be different. She continued by

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\* It was suggested that the man may even apologize for his behavior, but Rev. Orozu stated that a man's apologizing in this way was not a part of Murle culture.

saying that the man must find a different release for his anger, such as taking a walk. Other men need to stop drinking. The woman must decide to leave if her life is in danger. The church must protect and support this woman, and if things are severe enough, the proper authorities must be alerted.

### **Trauma and Children**

Rev. Debbie then introduced the topic of children. Rev. John Tubuwa read “The Story of Kasi” in *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 41-42). The reading tells the story of Kasi, a boy who’s village is attacked. Kasi’s family must run into the bush. He witnesses the death of a friend and the burning of his village. The villagers do well in the bush, setting up church activities and some schooling. After a while they return back to their village and try to rebuild, but Kasi is not the same happy, helpful, studious boy he once was. After the reading was finished, Rev. Debbie asked a couple of the questions from the book following the story. First, she asked what kind of a boy Kasi was before the attack. The women responded that he was a good, well-behaved boy. Rev. Debbie added that he was also a good student, and that he consistently did his chores. She then asked how Kasi changed after the attack. The women responded that he started to cry, wet his bed, and have nightmares. He did not listen to his parents, stopped wanting to go to school, and the games he played became violent. Rev. Debbie then asked the women why they thought Kasi’s behavior had changed. They responded that he had suffered trauma caused by war.

At this point, Rev. Debbie explained the effects trauma can have on children. She explained that they can change emotionally, physically, and behaviorally. At this point a woman recalled that when her own daughter had lost her father, the daughter would have nightmares in which she would relive the tragedy over and over again. Another woman stated that after the attack in Lekwangole, the children displayed many of the changes being discussed. The children now always think an attack is coming. When Lekwangole was attacked, Pibor was evacuated. The woman said that now her daughter would bring a carrier to her father and ask him to run because the daughter always thinks another attack is coming. Many more similar Lekwangole stories were shared.

After the stories had been shared, Rev. Debbie told the participants that trauma can impact a child greatly, but a child with the right care can grow and develop normally into a happy mature person. She presented the women with four key things to do to help the children:

- 1) Keep the family together as best as possible. Also, be sure to re-establish routines.
- 2) Listen to our children’s pain, just as we learned to listen to the pain of adults. In the case of children, they may need to be asked to draw a picture and explain the drawing in order to learn the child’s thoughts and feelings.
- 3) Children must be told the truth when something is wrong. Also, older children should be able to know more.
- 4) Children should be given time to play with each other. Girls should be given personal space.



## **DAY FOUR**

**Saturday, 28 November**

(Before the start of the workshop, a woman approached Rev. Debbie to inform her of the true extent of beatings. She was told that beatings happen to all women, including the wives of the church pastors.)

The devotion for the morning came from Acts 2:38-39:

<sup>38</sup>Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

We as Christians are called to Jesus, and we must respond. The workshop of RECONCILE has come to help call us, and it is good to see.

### **Re-Cap of Friday**

As usual, the workshop started with a re-cap of the previous day. Rev. Debbie asked the women what they had learned on Friday. The women responded:

- Traumatized people can cause problems.
- We must try to solve the problem of violence at home peacefully.
- We must let our hurt out that is caused by violence.
- Learned how trauma affects children.
- Treatment and prevention of syphilis. This woman also mentioned that women who miscarry can be beaten for not being faithful.
- We must help traumatized people as a family.
- Beaten women must be protected. Separation of the man and woman may be necessary. Some woman in bad situations may commit suicide.
- Reporting rape will discourage rape.
- Raped women must go to the clinic.

### **Sexual Abuse of Children**

The first topic of the day centered on the sexual abuse of children. Rev. Debbie stated that it is not usually mentally ill people who abuse children sexually. It is often committed by people of power or those who are not sexually satisfied with their spouse. At this point, a woman interjected to again make sure it was known that incest was not a big problem in Murle culture. It may happen once in a while, but it is very hidden. Rev. Debbie then continued by explaining that sexual abuse of children may impact them even deeper than beatings. Children will often not report this type of abuse, but there are signs to look for. She then listed off a few signs to watch for, including sleeping difficulties, violent behavior, talking about sex, running away, drug abuse, suicidal thoughts, and others. It is very hard for a child to say what is happening to them, so it is important to sit with them on a regular basis in order to build trust. As a reminder, the child can draw a picture and explain it if necessary. We must remember to protect the child from the abuser. Children are very vulnerable, and may give in to suicidal thoughts.

Rev. Debbie stated the importance of educating the community about this problem. Also, children should be educated about ways to protect themselves from such abuse. These ways were outlined in a handout, and Rev. Debbie reviewed some of these. Finally, she told the women that cases of sexual abuse should be treated like gender-based violence. The cases must be reported and approached correctly.

## **Inter-Ethnic Violence**

The next issue on the agenda for the workshop was the incredibly problematic inter-ethnic fighting that has been occurring in the area. Again, the men were invited to this segment of the workshop, and Rev. Debbie thanked the few of them who came for coming.

Rev. Debbie started the segment by asking how we should live as Christians in the midst of conflict. “Liwi-Oki Conflict” was read in the Murle language from *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* (Hill, Hill and Baggé 91-92). This was a story of a century-old ethnic conflict. The reading explained that children of each tribe were taught about the savagery of the other tribe. The story then introduces two Christian characters from the opposing tribes, Jonah and Bozon. The two figures find themselves at a conference together. After working together, they get to know each other, they find out that each other are Christians, and their communication begins to dispel their false ideas about the opposing tribe. Rev. Debbie pointed out that this was an excellent example of how bad story-telling can affect the dynamics of tribal relations. Next, the participants were divided up into four groups to answer the question, “How could they [Jonah and Bozon] begin to bring the two groups together?” (Hill, Hill, Miersma and Baggé 93). The responses of the four groups are found below:

- Group led by John Tubuwa: They should walk together and then share what they discussed. The groups will understand and reconcile.
- Group led by Becky: They must teach their respective groups about the other tribe.
  - Rev. Debbie then stated that we must go deeper for a solution. People will not “just get together.”
  - Another woman said, “Our sons are dying for reasons they don’t understand. Women must take a stand and try to do what happened in the story. We must pray. Let us be an example.”
- Group led by Maria: The fighting that is happening is over lies and misunderstandings. Misinformation is fueling fighting. The truth must be preached like in the story.
- Group led by Rev. Joseph: In the story, the spirit of the Lord brought the two people together, and then they went back to their respective groups and brought the groups together. The two characters uncovered the facts, and the facts brought them together.

At this point a woman named Martha stood and told a story of her own. She told the group that she had attended a workshop in Khartoum. While there, a Nuer came up to her and asked if the Murle really ate people and drank blood. She was asked how she could live among such people. The Nuer was also surprised that Martha was a Christian. Martha told the Nuer that Jesus had come for everyone.

Continuing off of this last story, Rev. Debbie asked the participants what else has been said about the Murle. The women responded that they were called thieves, abductors of children, mud-eaters, homeless, and cannibals. Rev. Debbie then asked why these things were said, and asked if there was any truth to the rumors. Responses included the following:

- The Dinka sold children to us, and then reported them as abductions.
- It is better for us to buy a child than have it thrown away.
- We also have criminals among us.
- We are uneducated. Others have education and can fight with their education.

A woman told a story of misinformation almost causing a deadly confrontation. She said that the Murle church people were doing an evangelism march. The SPLA was told that the march was actually a Murle attack. The SPLA forced the march across the river, and some of the marchers

ran away. The SPLA commander, after learning of the confusion, admitted that he had been told of an imminent attack by the Murle. He did not even realize that there were Christians among the Murle people. “We are a peaceful people,” another woman said. Rev. Debbie confirmed that some of the allegations were totally false, but she also said there was some truth as well. She said that there definitely are thieves among the Murle people. She asked how it felt to be generalized because of the actions of a few. The response was that it was angering. The participants were then asked if they had heard any similar stories generalizing other tribes. Responses included:

- The Taposa come at night and torture and kill everyone. This led to the practice of indiscriminate killing.
- The Taposa are very clever thieves.
- The Taposa, when they are spying, stand on their heads to look like trees.
- The Nuer are bad people and are murderers.
- The Taposa are beggars and killers. They should not be given food.

Rev. Debbie then pointed out that just as the stories told about the Murle are not all true, the stories we hear about others may also not be true. A good example of this is news on the radio. All we hear about is bad news over the radio, while good things are rarely mentioned. She stated that she had been with the Dinka, Nuer, and Murle, and that each tribe was great and hospitable, but they all have similar stories about other tribes.



At this point, a diagram of a tree was brought out. Rev. Debbie explained that the diagram was the “tree of conflict.” She asked what types of conflict were seen in the area. The participants responded that there were conflicts between them and the Nuer, Dinka, Taposa, Anyuak, and Jiye. These conflicts were written around the branches of the tree. Rev. Debbie then asked what some of the causes of conflict were. The responses included cows, grazing land, hunger, dowry, wealth, and revenge. These were written as the roots of conflict. Rev. Debbie then pointed out that all of these things that were written as roots of conflict

could be found in Tanzania, yet there is little fighting there. Why is that? A man responded that the people of Tanzania feared their government. This led Rev. Debbie into her next point. She stated that the Tanzanian government is strong and can protect its people. However, there is no such protection in a place like Lekwangole or Burmath. There is no protection along tribal borders here. She explained that the Government of Southern Sudan is young, and just as a child must mature over time, so must a government. This weak government must be seen as an additional root cause of conflict. In addition to this, past wars and the trauma caused by these wars have created a culture of war, and so this should also be added as a root cause.

Rev. Debbie continued by explaining that there are also powerful figures, such as our leaders, who are actually pushing for war. Deceptions have urged conflicts to continue. Many political figures do not wish to see a successful peace agreement—this includes both northerners and southerners. Guns have been shipped in, orders have been given for the SPLA to stay in

barracks during tribal conflicts, and tribal anger has been stirred up. The few leaders who are promoting this are very dangerous. We must educate our people. The enemies of the Peace Agreement is happy to see the Murle, Nuer, and Dinka fighting; it saves them trouble of having to kill anybody themselves. Some leaders are happy to hear that 1,400 people have died in this area this year. As Christians, we must understand the true roots of conflict. We should be able to reconcile our real differences.

Rev. Debbie then split the participants up into five groups to look at Bible passages dealing with ethnic relations, and each was told to discuss and report what the passages meant:

The first group was given Matthew 10:29-31:

<sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

The group reported that the passage means that we should hold onto God without fear. The Lord loves us and will take care of us. He can protect us.

The second group was given Revelations 5:9-10:

<sup>9</sup>And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. <sup>10</sup>You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

The group reported that the passage requires us to sing a new song, not the old song of our culture. We are like deaf people when we don't read the book of God. Jesus has purchased all our tribes. We must honor Him in our debt to bring peace. We will become rulers of all nations.

The third group was given 1 John 2:10-11:

<sup>10</sup>Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. <sup>11</sup>But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

The group reported that the passage tells us that the killing of Murle, Nuer, and Dinka means that we are still in darkness. The light is here, but many cannot see it through the accusations. You [RECONCILE] have helped to bring this light. A person in the light cannot harm a brother or sister.

The fourth group was given Romans 13:1-4:

<sup>1</sup>Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup>Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup>For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. <sup>4</sup>For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

The group reported that the passage tells us that rulers are chosen by God, and we should obey them, for this is what God wishes. If tribal leaders tell us not to fight, and we don't fight, the leader and God will be happy. Today, you [RECONCILE] are our leaders trying to correct us. At this point Rev. Debbie stated that she believed that God put governments on Earth to protect us; but this is a broken world, and even the government is broken sometimes. Be sure that when you are obeying the government, you are obeying Jesus as well. This passage must go together with Acts 4:18-20, which states:

<sup>18</sup>Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup>For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

The fifth group was given Acts 10:34-36:

<sup>34</sup>Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism <sup>35</sup>but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. <sup>36</sup>You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

The group reported that if you worship God, He will not forget you, no matter where in the world you are. The word of God brought you [RECONCILE] here because everything was created by God. We differ only in color, but we are all a family of peace. We need more teachings like this.

### **Traditional vs. Christian Practices.**

Next, Rev. Debbie split the participants into small groups once again. The groups were given a list of situations, and were asked to discuss what their grandparents would do in such situations (not what they themselves would do), to ascertain what traditional Murle cultural practices were. Then, the group as a whole would decide if these cultural practices were compatible with Christianity, or if the practices should be stopped.

- Group 1: What would your grandparents do if...
  - ...a man from another family beat a child to the point of bleeding?
    - The parents of the child, the suspect, and witnesses would hold a trial. If the suspect is guilty, he is asked to bring a bull to slaughter.
    - It was decided that this practice is fine.
  - ...a girl is raped by a young man?
    - The young man is forced to marry the girl or pay a cow.
    - There were some differing opinions but many of the women felt this is a fair practice, and that it is backed by the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 22:28-29
- Group 2: What would your grandparents do if...
  - ...faced with a case of child neglect?
    - The perpetrator would be shunned by his age mates, and they will force him to provide for the child. The woman can open a case against the husband to age mates, and the man may be fined. The woman is allowed to stay at the home of an age mate.
  - ...an abducted child is brought home to the village from a raid?
    - Our ancestors would be happy.
  - We must not be happy about the abduction of children. We must not sing praises.
    -
  - ...a woman is raped by a community member?
    - The relatives will go fight the rapist. The woman's husband will accept the baby.
  - We should hold on to the spirit of reconciliation.
- Group 3: What would your grandparents do if...
  - ...a woman who was abducted returns?

- A witchdoctor conducts a cleansing ceremony before she returns. When she returns, the entire community gathers with shouts of praises. A bull is slaughtered, and the “bowel movement” of the bull is sprinkled.
    - As Christians, we can bring her to the church and slaughter a goat. We can present Bible verses to encourage her. We will not sprinkle the bowel movement.
  - ...an abducted woman returns pregnant?
    - We accept the child. The mother was not in the wrong, so there is no problem with the child.
    - As Christians this is good.
  - ...two warring groups want to make peace?
    - Chiefs of the two groups come, each bringing their own spear. The spears are broken and buried. This signifies that they must not attack each other or they will die. A bull is slaughtered, and the meat is divided equally.
    - As Christians we do not break the spear. We cannot participate in such a ceremony. We cannot eat the meat.
    - Rev. Orozu offered an explanation. He explained that when he was asked to help make peace between the Nuer and Murle in Lekwangole, they simply prayed and went away. They did not do any of the traditional things, and the peace held. Rev. Debbie then asked about the idea of the breaking of the spear. Is this not a biblical image? Could Christians not embrace this and transform it as a part of Christian practice? Rev. Orozu responded that no, this was unacceptable. He explained that the practice would confuse people, and they would think that old practices are acceptable. We cannot break and bury a spear on church grounds; the traditional people who become Christians will think we are doing bad things. We cannot even eat the meat of the slaughtered bull.
- Group 4: What would your grandparents do if...
  - ...abducted children were introduced to the community?
    - There were praises.
    - This practice must be thrown away.
  - ...an abducted child returned home?
    - A bull was slaughtered and praises were sung.
    - We can accept this.



**DAY FIVE**  
**Monday, 30 November**

Sunday was not a workshop day. Rev. Debbie delivered a sermon on gender-based violence at the morning church service. Sunday afternoon was taken off.

## **Re-Cap of Saturday**

On this final day of the workshop, it was decided that the devotion would be covered at the closing ceremony, when everyone—including the men—were present. Thus, the day started immediately with the daily re-cap of the previous day. Rev. Debbie asked what the women had learned on Saturday. The women responded:

- We must come together with opposing tribes, pray, and reconcile our differences.
- It is not good to abduct women and children. We must tell our men to stop.
- Treat children in a good way for a good family future.
- We should not make a girl marry her rapist. She should marry the man of her choice.
- All of our children, including our girls, should be sent to school.
- Marriages should not be forced.
- Husbands and wives must respect one another.
- We must take responsibility to tell our sons not to take cattle. We have been hard on those who have not brought home cattle, and our sons are dying because of this.
- Orphans must be treated well.
- Your body is private for you.
- Conflict brings violence to the household and community, and also brings trauma to children.
- We must know the root causes of problems and conflicts.
- The church must come together during times of violence.
- Rape must be reported.

## **Planning Resolutions and Recommendations**

This was the point in the workshop when the women broke into groups in order to plan what they could do or recommend to help solve the issues discussed at the workshop. There were four groups. Becky's group was assigned the issues of community and domestic violence. The groups of Rev. John Tubuwa, Evangelist Peter Mama, and Maria & Nathan were assigned the issues related to inter-ethnic conflict.

Before the groups presented their plans, however, there was a discussion held concerning a possible meeting between the Murle and Nuer people—specifically Presbyterian women—in the near future. This workshop being held in the Murle towns of Pibor and Gummuruk had also been held in the Nuer town of Akobo a couple of weeks earlier. During the workshop in Akobo, the women decided to send a letter to the women of Pibor. The letter condemned the conflict that had been going on between the two tribes, stated commitments to try to bring an end to the fighting, and requested that there be a meeting of women between the two towns to discuss the prospects of peace. This letter may be found as Appendix A.

There was first a discussion as to where the meeting should take place. A woman reminded those present that the last time a Murle chief was sent to Akobo, he and his assistant were killed.\* After some discussion, it was unanimously decided that the meeting should be held in Pibor, as was requested in the letter from the women of Akobo. The next point of discussion revolved around who should be invited to the meeting. Although the letter suggested that the meeting be strictly for women, the women of Pibor decided that men must be included, since it is the men who fight. One woman said the conference should include a male majority. Another woman

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\* This story was also told to RECONCILE facilitators at the workshop in Gummuruk.

contested that the meeting should have a female majority, arguing that the men never get anything done. Another woman backed this by stating, “[While] women mourn, men take spears.” It was decided that women would organize and run the meeting, while men who were conducive to promoting a peace process would be invited as well.

Next, group presentations were conducted. The groups shared their thoughts on resolutions for themselves and recommendations for others.

- Group led by Rev. John Tubuwa:
  - On December 8, when all the church women meet in Langachot, we will create a “Woman Peace Committee.” The committee will compose of a chairwoman, vice chairwoman, secretary, vice secretary, and treasurer. The makeup of the committee will be those who completed the current workshop. Area pastors and congregations will be called together to come up with ways to alleviate inter-ethnic conflict.
  - Through church leaders, the Women Peace Committee will ask the commissioner of Pibor County to call all the chiefs to Pibor town for a peace meeting. Then, together with the chiefs, we will move together as a team from boma to boma to tell our sons to stop cattle-raiding and child abductions. This should be done in the middle of January, 2010.
  - We will ask the commissioner of Pibor County to provide our committee with transportation and security.
  - A peace letter should be sent to the women of Akobo.
  - We urge the government to open the roads and provide tight security. Then we will be able to carry out exchange visits and trade goods, which will reduce violence.
- Group led by Maria and Nathan:
  - Recommendation: Ask the government to send expert advisors to provide the Pibor community with advice on farming.
  - Resolution: We will not accept cattle that were stolen as payment for marriage of our daughters. We will send this message to the seven churches of the Pibor area by the end of January. Each church will urge their communities to not accept stolen cattle as payment for wives.
- Group led by Evangelist Peter Mama:
  - The Murle, Nuer, and Pochalla must get together for peace.
  - We request RECONCILE to provide transport for peace activities and other support.
    - A woman stated, “We, the women of Pibor, feel we are just giving birth to children who will die.”
  - The government must help us with communication and travel. The commissioner can help us with communication with the women of Pibor.



- We request that fifteen women come as “open-door people.” This will be a one-day meeting of intention and invitation.
- Group led by Becky:
  - The women promise to talk to their sons and husbands about stopping bad behaviors towards families and the community. If these men refuse, cases will be brought to the church leaders, chiefs, and other authorities.
  - We shall send reports of domestic violence and abuse to the proper authorities.
  - As church women, we will work to solve non-severe cases of domestic violence. Severe cases shall be handed to the proper authorities.
  - We shall learn our community’s strengths and weaknesses in respect to addressing domestic violence.
  - We will work together with the church to improve community life by changing behaviors to prevent domestic violence.
  - We will involve elders, church leaders, and local authorities to help our community.

These suggestions were combined and revised to make a list of resolutions and recommendations. These can be found as Appendix H.

The women also dictated a response letter to the women of Akobo. This letter can be found as Appendix I.

### **Closing Ceremony**

Finally, there was a closing ceremony to conclude the workshop. Men were invited to this final segment. It started with devotion. The Bible passage used was Matthew 5:6-9:

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. <sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. <sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. <sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

The message was that our sister (Rev. Debbie) came to teach us what God wants, and she will receive blessings from the Lord. Let our hearts follow what the verse asks, with the help of God.

Next was that participants’ speech, which Maria delivered. She stated that the Lord had chosen those from RECONCILE to leave their lands to come and teach us. She proclaimed, “Although we have not heard a woman pastor, we hope that we will now grow.” She then read Philemon 1-7:

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, <sup>2</sup>to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home: <sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup>because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. <sup>6</sup>I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. <sup>7</sup>Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

“You have brought us great joy. You have shown your hearts have no discrimination; you are travelling to all tribes. What you have taught is very good. Perhaps some of these women can help you in workshops elsewhere. We invite you to come whenever you can come. Although you are from far, we pray that we can be of one mind... Our skin is different, but our hearts and love are the same.”

Next, John and Becky both gave short messages of peace. Becky also led the group in a chant in which she would yell “We!” and the women would respond, “Women!” She would then yell “What do we want!?” and the women would respond “Change!”

Rev. Debbie then addressed the group. She told the women that they had been given every reason to become discouraged over the past year, “...yet through this workshop you have strengthened my own faith, and you have taught me just as much as I have taught you.”

Rev. Orozu then read out loud the resolutions and recommendations that the women had created. The men were asked if what was read was something they could support. They affirmed that they were.

Rev. Joseph Motsi, the moderator of the Pibor church, then addressed the group. He said that the Lord sends His workers all over the world, just as was said in Matthew 9:35-38:

<sup>35</sup>Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

<sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup>Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

He stated that Rev. Debbie had been sent as it was said in the Bible, from far away. He also pointed out that Evangelist Peter Mama had also come, despite his disability (Peter is a paraplegic). ““You must put the light on the table to give light to the room.’ This has happened at this workshop.” The Reverend then mentioned Matthew 10:40-42:

<sup>40</sup>"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.

<sup>41</sup>Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. <sup>42</sup>And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Rev. Motsi concluded by stating, “The lord will bless you for your services.”

Next, the letter from the women of Pibor to the women of Akobo was read by Rev. Orozu. Certificates of completion were distributed to the participants. The women then sang “The Great Commission” (Matt 28:19-20) in Murle, and Rev. Motsi said a prayer and delivered the parting blessing.



## **CONCLUSION**

The objectives of these workshops were met. Not only did the women show a noticeably deeper understanding of the concepts of the rights of women and children which are supported by Human Rights declarations and the Bible but they gained insights to how their culture upholds and erodes those rights. They gained a basic understanding of trauma and its effects and learned basic skills on how to be “wounded healers’ as they minister to children and adults who are victims of violence within the community and home as well as the inter-ethnic violence. The women made specific plans on how to prevent future violence which are reflected in their resolutions and recommendations.

RECONCILE will continue to support these women by facilitating a peace building meeting between the Murle and Nuer women in early 2010 and by continuing to monitor their progress and support them as they carry through their plans through our Key Mobilizers and Jonglei State Field Coordinator.

## APPENDIX A

### Letter from the Women of Akobo to their counterparts of the Murle Tribe

Dear sisters of the Murle tribe,

You, Murle women, are our sisters. This problem has been with us for many years and it has caused us all to suffer. We want to meet you.

If you accept peace then talk to your sons and husbands to accept disarmament.

We encourage you to tell your husband's to have one wife only.

We will stop our men from coming to raid your cattle. Tell your men to also stop the raiding of cattle.

We will talk to our men (Lou and Jikany) and you talk to men on your side. Afterwards let us talk in a combined meeting.

We are praying here for peace, you too pray for peace, God will hear us.

We the Lou Nuer women urge you to remember the times ago when we would meet and not kill ourselves.

We know that we have killed you and you have killed us. In God's name we will leave raiding. We pray the killings can stop. We are requesting for a joint meeting of us as women.

We as Lou women have met with our commissioner in Akobo County, we urge you to meet your commissioner to stop the violence which has killed many young people almost to finishing ourselves.

As we are going to elections, those who have died will not vote. Let us leave fighting so that we can have people to vote in the referendum or else we shall remain very few.

The violence is so much that it is reaching the women and children, even God cannot hear our prayers.

I am speaking as your Lou sister, if the funding permits we are willing to come and have a workshop with you in Pibor.

We women of Akobo Presbytery tell you, talk to the people who corrupt your people with violence; we will also talk to our people.

We women of Lou trained by RECONCILE, let us make plans to meet after Christmas this year, by Jan or February we will come and be with you.

Sisters of Pibor and Gummuruk we have had war for a long time. We are crying so much it is like when Jesus said the women of Jerusalem will weep. If you are crying like us let us make peace.

Our sisters in Pibor, if your sons take our cattle to marry wives, please don't encourage it. We kill ourselves for cattle. It would be right if we kill our cattle for food, but just to finish lives is not right.

We are sad to hear of the losses of your children and we are sad of the loss of our children too. May all these pains end soon.

Your sisters in Akobo County

\*The above letter was composed on November 9, 2009 at the "Preventing & Responding to Violence" workshop facilitated by RECONCILE and sponsored by Presbyterian women (PCUSA). It is a compilation of the individual messages the PCOS women of Akobo (and 5 ecumenical delegates) wanted to send their Presbyterian sisters in Pibor County.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Women's Rights & United Nations Conventions - Specific Conventions that Relate to Women\***

#### **Equality and Non Discrimination**

- Women have the right to be treated equally under the law in the same way as men.
- Women have the right to freedom of thought, to decide what they think is right or wrong and to worship as they want.
- Women have the freedom to say what they want without fearing they will be punished.
- All human beings have the right to live in a world where their rights and freedoms are respected.

#### **Work and Education**

- Women have the right to work and to choose the job they wish
- Women and men are entitled to economic (having to do with money), social (having to do with relating to other people in the community) and cultural rights that allow them dignity and freedom as individuals.
- Women have a right to rest and to have free time.
- Women and girls have the same rights to be educated ( go to school) as men and boys

#### **Participation**

- Women have the right to take part in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy all of the arts and all other good things that have been achieved through development.

#### **Marriage**

- Women can choose the man they want to marry and they must not be pushed to marry someone they do not want to marry.
- Women have the same rights and responsibilities as men in their marriage.
- Women have the same rights as men when a marriage ends. They have same rights in a divorce as men.
- Women have the same rights as men to use family planning services (birth control).
- Women have the same rights as their husband to choose a family name and a profession (job).
- Women have the same rights as men regarding their nationality and that of their children.
- Women have the right to own land and other property.
- Women have the same rights to their children as their men do. They have the same responsibilities to the children as men do. It makes no difference if the woman is married or single.

#### **Violence Against Women**

- Women have the right to be protected from violence (beatings) from husbands or any other family member.
- Countries must speak against violence against women. They must stop buying and selling of women and forcing women into prostitution.
- Women have the right to the best medical care and mental health care available. They have the right to equal access to all health services including family planning.
- Everyone has the right to life, liberty (freedom) and to be protected from violence.
- Women have a right to live without suffering, torture or punishment that is cruel, inhuman or disrespectful.

\*Adapted by Rev. Debbie Braaksma, RECONCILE, 2009

## APPENDIX C

### Declaration of the Rights of the Child\*

**Principle 1** The child shall enjoy all the rights set forth in this Declaration. All children must be given these rights no matter what their race, their sex, their religion, their tribe or country is.

**Principle 2** The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given the opportunity so that they can develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

**Principle 3** The child shall be entitled from his birth to a name and a nationality.

**Principle 4** The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security. He shall be entitled to grow and develop in health. Therefore, special care and protection shall be provided both to him or her and to the mother. This will include pre-natal and post-natal care. The child shall have the right to the food, housing, and medical care in order to grow well. They also have the right to play.

**Principle 5** The child who has physical, mental or social problems shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.

**Principle 6** In order to develop well all children need love and understanding. They shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of their or others who can love and provide well for them. Young children shall not, except in emergencies, be separated from their mother. Society and the public authorities shall have the duty to extend care to children without a family and to those without adequate means of support. Payment of State and other assistance towards the maintenance of children of large families is desirable.

**Principle 7** The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and is required, at least in the elementary stages – primary school. He or she shall be given an education which will promote his or her general culture and enable ALL of them, to develop their abilities, their individual judgment, and their sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society. Whatever is best for the child shall be the main principle which guides those responsible for their education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents. The child shall have the right for play and recreation.

**Principle 8** The child shall in all circumstances be among the first to receive protection and relief.

**Principle 9** The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. They shall not be the subject of trafficking – he or she must not be bought or sold - in any form. The child shall not be hired to a job, for employment. Working at home must not hurt him or her from getting a good education and it should not hurt his or her physical, mental or moral development.

**Principle 10**

The child shall be protected from practices which may encourage racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in knowing that their energy and talents should be devoted to the service of their fellow men and women. \*Revised by Rev. Debbie Braaksma RECONCILE 10/09

## APPENDIX D

**Reference: Consultant Report.**

**Compiled by: Lagu John Julius**

**Objective of the Workshop Module.**

To Increase community awareness on sexually transmitted infections /diseases (STI/Ds), particularly Syphilis

- On the 19<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2009 a training workshop was conducted in Gummuruk Payam and Pibor town, in Pibor County, targeting the women household/groups. The workshop addressed violence against women and children as it relates to domestic violence and inter-tribal conflict. During the workshop, a specific bloc of time was also set aside as a module with a message on sexually transmitted infections/diseases STI/Ds. There were approximately 50 female participants at each workshop, for a total of 100 over the span of both workshops.
- **Goal of the training**
  - To increase knowledge and skills concerning sexually transmitted diseases, specifically Syphilis, and its modes of transmission , as well as how to prevent infection.
  - To describe the major complications of syphilis.

**Expectations**

- Increase of community awareness concerning STI/Ds, especially syphilis.
- Knowledge about STIs, especially syphilis.
- How STIs are transmitted.

**Topics/Sessions covered**

- **STIs**
- **Sub topics**
- ✓ Syphilis
- ✓ Condom use
- ✓ Abstainace and being faithful

**Methodologies used during the training**

- Group discussion encouraging everyone to participate in the discussion, which, in turn, helped us to measure the level of the community's understanding about STI/Ds.
- Use of translators to simplify English medical terminology into a simpler Murle language, so that the participants will understand better what it means.
- Use of facilitation skills to help the workshop to be enjoyable.

### Questions asked by the Participants

- Why is it that a woman does not easily realise that she is infected with an STI such as Syphilis?
- Why is it that a person who takes alcohol every day and is infected with gonorrhoea does not feel any pain even when urinating?
- What causes Syphilis?
- Is there any treatment for syphilis and Gonorrhoea?
- What are the signs of syphilis and Gonorrhoea?
- Can Syphilis cause infertility?
- Can Syphilis cause pre-mature birth of children?

### Challenges faced during the training.

- Short amount of time to cover much information..
- Not enough of the sexually active youth were invited.

### Personal Discoveries at the Local Clinics

- **Medicine Sans Frontiers- Gummuruk**
- ❖ Erythromycin and Benzathine were the drugs of treatment being used.
- ❖ Pregnant women were being treated, but only given half doses.
- ❖ According to MSF, there is a 28% infection rate among those who were tested for syphilis.
- ❖ Severe lack of drugs, people cannot be sufficiently treated for syphilis.
- **MSF- Pibor**
- ❖ Erythromycin and Benzathine were the drugs of treatment being used, but Benzathine preferred by staff.
- ❖ 47% infection rate among those tested.
- ❖ Severe lack of drugs, people cannot be sufficiently treated for syphilis.

### Future recommendations

- Trainings should be organised for government officials as well as community leaders.
- More trainings for different target groups such as religious groups, youth out of school, youth in school, women's groups.
- Community outreach should be organised in the community using video shows.
- Film shows, such as the film *Silent Epidemic*, should be involved in the training sessions, so that the participants can realise some of the internal signs and symptoms of STI/Ds.
- Murle Language information, communication and education (ICE) materials should be produced on STI/D prevention that.
- Proper STI/D treatment services must be established.

## APPENDIX E

### 6 Things Children Should Know to Help Prevent Sexual Abuse

- 1) Children must be taught about OK touches and Not OK Touches. If they feel uncomfortable about where someone touches them they should listen to their feelings.
- 2) Children need to understand what their private parts are. The parts of their bodies that are always covered by clothes.
- 3) Children must be taught that their bodies are their own. They can say no to people, adults or other children who want to touch them if it makes them feel uncomfortable, even if that person is a family member or a teacher or a pastor or a community leader.
- 4) Children can be helped to practice saying no and also to name some trusted adults that they can tell if someone's touching has made them uncomfortable. They must be encouraged to tell an adult if they are being abused or someone wants to abuse them or they do not feel comfortable about how someone has touched them. They should keep telling until someone believes them.
- 5) Children should be helped to understand that they do not have to keep a secret that makes them feel uncomfortable. If they are uncomfortable they should tell an adult.
- 6) The shame and guilt of abuse should belong to the abuser. Children are never to blame. Children can be taught how to be careful and how to say no BUT they cannot always prevent abuse. They should never be made to feel that they caused the abuse. The best thing they can do is to tell someone.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Letter from Murle Presbyterian Women Fellowship in Gummuruk to Nuer Presbyterian Women Fellowship in Akobo**

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Thank you very much for the letter which we received from you. We are very much happy about the letter. Now we want to say this: talk to your husbands and sons about peace. We are not happy when our husbands and sons kill each other. We urge you strongly to advise your men to stop raiding and in our turn we will do the same. We are tired with the killing of the innocent lives. We pray to you to open up ways for peace for all of us. Our hearts are painful for the loss of our men and sons. Let us tackle root causes and stop this violence among our communities. We may not have blessings from God unless we have reconciliation that comes from God. If you are serious of what you say, we are ready to meet with you. It is always better to discuss things and seek peace in our open hearts. We should forget the past and open new chapter of peace and reconciliation. We are PCoS women fellowship. Let us pray so that the Lord will touch the hearts of many community members that they will be serious about peace. We are sending this letter from PCoS women fellowship. We are looking forward to meeting you in Pibor. As soon as you receive this letter we need your feedback. We want the meeting to take place as soon as possible. If you accept our invitation our venue of the meeting will be Pibor County. Let us give these plans to God so that this meeting will take place as planned. We need to begin new relationship full of love instead of hatred. We should talk peace if we don't take peace we will continue to give birth to children who will be going to die in fighting. Read Matthew 5:9 and Matthew 6:24-25.

## APPENDIX G

### Resolutions and Recommendations of the Murle Women of the Presbyterian Church in Gummuruk, Jonglei State

The following is a list of resolutions and recommendations made by the participants of the workshop facilitated by RECONCILE in Gummuruk, Jonglei from 19 November through the 24 November, 2009.

#### Resolutions

- 1) We will report all abductions to the chiefs. We will follow the cases to make sure the report continues to reach the payam administrator and commissioner in order to make sure the children and/or women are returned.
- 2) We will immediately go to our homes to share what we learned at the workshop. We will also hold meetings in each of the nine churches we attend. We will share information on the following topics in our homes and in our churches:
  - a. What it means to be a good husband and father, and a good mother and wife.
  - b. How to stop violence against women and how to control anger and communicate peacefully in our homes.
  - c. How to treat girls fairly, such as not sending them to the cattle camps unsupervised.
  - d. How and why we should encourage education of our children, especially girls.
  - e. How to heal the wounds of trauma.
  - f. How and why we should stop attitudes and actions that encourage violence (such as saying bad things about other tribes).
- 3) We will take what we learned on trauma healing and help our children, husbands, and community members who have trauma.
- 4) We will go to the boma chiefs to request that women be involved in the peace process. We will consult with our church leaders to find out who these boma chiefs are, and we will ask them to accompany us.
- 5) In December, we will talk to our husbands and sons and ask them not to raid cattle, practice child abductions, or take part in any kind of violence. We will also talk in church meetings about this.
- 6) We will call for a big prayer meeting before Christmas of all the churches in Gummuruk area to pray for peace. We will also have prayer meetings in each church, and we will go house-to-house praying for peace at Christmas time.

- 7) We promise to try to bring women leaders together from the Nuer and Murle tribes to make plans for peace. This will be initiated by the PCOS church women and we will lead the meeting to be held in Pibor. We will invite men who can help us in the peace process to participate. We will inform the government and ask them to provide security.
- 8) We will write a letter to U.S. partner churches asking for advocacy regarding UN bases and UN-sponsored disarmament.
- 9) We will meet in one month to report on how we are doing on our plans, and we will make plans to move forward. At that time we will elect a committee to work on stopping violence and promoting peace.

#### Recommendations

- 1) The government must construct roads. Free movement will promote social contact and trade between tribes. Trade will discourage stealing. Construction of future schools will also be easier.
- 2) The government should bring us a clinic or hospital and medicine.
- 3) The government, UN, or other humanitarian aid organization must help us in water development. Access to water will help bring peace, then we will not need to leave our land to find water for our cows. There should be construction of a dam for us so we have water.
- 4) Hunger causes tribal fighting. The UN should airdrop food to help prevent hunger.
- 5) The UN should return to Pibor and Akobo to help with security because recently, when there have been tribal raids, the government forces have refused to protect both sides. We would like U.S. churches to advocate for this.
- 6) The UN or other organization should help with education. A school for all tribes will promote peace.
- 7) America should press UNMIS to disarm Dinka, Nuer, and Murle. Advocacy by the U.S. government is necessary. We ask our partner churches to push for this.
- 8) We request a bigger NGO/FBO presence.
- 9) The government should send forces of mixed tribes. Troops should be based at the borders of tribes. The government must be neutral and not favor any tribe. We will also send our MPs a letter concerning this. We will follow up with them to see that the letter goes through all of the correct channels and reaches President Salva Kiir.

## APPENDIX H

### Resolutions and Recommendations of the Murle Women of the Presbyterian Church in Pibor, Jonglei State

The following is a list of resolutions and recommendations made by the participants of the workshop facilitated by RECONCILE in Pibor town, Jonglei from 25 November through the 30 November, 2009.

#### Resolutions

- 1) On December 8, when the women of the six area churches meet in Langachot, we will create a “Women Peace Committee.” The committee will consist of a chairwoman, vice chairwoman, secretary, vice secretary, and a treasurer. Membership will consist of women who have completed the workshop. The pastors and congregations of all six churches will be called upon to pray and plan for stopping inter-ethnic violence.
- 2) Through the church leaders, the *Women Peace Committee* will ask the commissioner of Pibor County to call the chiefs to Pibor town for a peace meeting. Together with the chiefs, we will move as a team from boma to boma to tell our sons to stop cattle-raiding and child-abduction. This should be done by the middle of January, 2010.
- 3) Given proper funding, we will meet with the women of Akobo in Pibor. We recommend that this meeting take place in January. The women will organize and lead the meeting, and men who can help with the peace process will be invited.
- 4) We will not accept cattle that were stolen as payment for marriage of our daughters. We will spread the message of this code of conduct to the seven churches in the Pibor area (including the Baptist church) by the end of January, 2010. Each church will urge their communities not to accept stolen cattle as payment for wives.
- 5) We promise to send reports of domestic violence and abuse of our children to the police and authorities, such as the commissioner, chiefs, headmen, and headwomen.
- 6) We promise to come together as church women to solve non-severe cases of domestic violence. Severe cases will be reported to the authorities.
- 7) We promise to work to understand our community’s strengths and weaknesses in regards to responding to violence against women and children.
- 8) In two weeks, we will meet with the leaders of our churches to educate them and discuss ways to decrease violence against women and children, including rape and beatings.

Recommendations

- 1) The commissioner of Pibor County should help to provide transportation and security for the Pibor meeting between the women of Pibor County and Akobo.
- 2) After the meeting in Pibor between the women of Pibor County and Akobo, we would like to set forth an exchange program to increase cultural awareness between the Murle and Nuer tribes, and to promote peace.
- 3) Hunger is a root cause of conflict. We ask that the government send experts to advise the Pibor County community on how to farm, in addition to raising cattle.
- 4) We urge the government/authorities to take strong action on any reports of abuse of women and children, including rape and beatings.
- 5) We urge the government to open the roads and provide tight security. This will promote the trade of goods and the exchange of visits. This will reduce violence.

## APPENDIX I

### Letter from Murle Presbyterian Women in Pibor Town to the Nuer Presbyterian Women in Akobo

We, women of Murle, are suffering from death of our children. During the time of our ancestors there were no killings of women and children. We are refusing to sleep with our husbands because we do not want to give birth to children who will be killed like in Burmath and Lekwangole.

We need peace. The abuse we received as women and children was painful for us.

We Murle women, we are very happy and we welcome you in advance. This year brought us something different. If we do as we wish—to come together—the Lord will accept this. If we do not put into use what we learned at this workshop, it is no good. When we hear your request to meet, we accept it with all of our hearts.

We Murle women have given our hearts to God. You must do the same. Which means our hearts are ready for peace.

We have received your letter, and we are so happy, and we are excited to greet you in Pibor.

We want to tell you that God has heard the cry of women, and He has sent his messengers from RECONCILE to reconcile us. Pray to God that people will listen and obey to what we say.

We want to inform you that we Murle women are always one. When we say yes we all mean yes.

The men used to fight and we don't fight. Therefore we should pray and come together. The Lord will be our spear.

We have received your letter and we are ready. May God bring you here to us peacefully.

Sisters in the Lord it is better for us to bring peace now because now our children are not able to go to school and we cannot do anything unless peace is in us.

We end by giving you a verse from the Bible. Mark 10:27-28. Since we know that everything is possible in the lord we know peace will happen.

We also send you Matthew 5:6-12 when God said blessed are the peacemakers!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Peace be with peace lovers on earth!