

**MURLE-NUER WOMEN'S PEACE
AND TRUST BUILDING MEETING
PIBOR COUNTY 8TH-11TH FEBRUARY
2010**



**RESOURCE CENTER FOR
CIVIL LEADERSHIP
(RECONCILE)**



INTRODUCTION

Southern Sudan overtook the Darfur region in Sudan in the number of mortalities per week in 2009. Inter-ethnic fighting alone claimed the lives of 2,500 people and displaced thousands more. 1,400 of these deaths occurred between February and August in Jonglei State alone, largely as a result of inter-ethnic conflict between the Murle and Nuer tribes. 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.

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 ethnic groups 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. Nuer women who attended the first workshop on Prevention of Violence against women and children, having been inspired by the training, wrote a letter expressing their desire to meet with their Murle sisters and start the process of making peace among the two ethnic groups. The Murle women responded positively: "When we hear your request to meet, we accept it with all of our hearts." The Murle women thereafter replied with a letter accepting the gesture and invited them to come to be Pibor. "... we are so happy, and we are excited to greet you in Pibor." The women from Gummuruk- a payam in Pibor- wrote: "We want the meeting to take place as soon as possible. We need to begin a new relationship full of love instead of hatred. We should talk peace if we don't talk peace we will continue to give birth to children who are going to be "finished" (die) in fighting."

The prayers of the Nuer and Murle women became a reality through the financial support of the Presbyterian Women USA and Sister Share- an initiative by the Women's Ministries of the Reformed Church in America. The peace and trust-building meeting between of the women from Nuer and Murle tribes of the Presbyterian Church of Sudan- Akobo Presbytery and East Jonglei Presbytery took place in Pibor County from 8th- 11th February 2010.

The main objective of the meeting between the Nuer and Murle women of the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS) was to initiate a peace process aimed at breaking the cycle of violence between their communities. The meeting achieved the following results:

- The relationship of the PCOS Murle and Nuer women as sisters in Christ was strengthened as the women worshiped, prayed and spent time together over four days.
- An opportunity to work toward reconciliation was provided and the women resolved to continue in the spirit of love and unity cultivated during the meeting.
- Finally specific plans for forging peace were made with a proposed reciprocate visit of the Murle women to the Nuer women of Akobo.

WARM WELCOME

Monday 8th February 2010

The travel of the women from Akobo and the RECONCILE team from Yei to and from Pibor County for the meeting was made possible through the much-appreciated services provided by Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) aircraft. This is the only means of travel between Akobo and Pibor given the insecurity of the ethnic fighting in 2009, which closed the roads between the two communities. When the MAF plane landed in Pibor on 8th February 2010, the RECONCILE team was received by a group of more than 40 women in white and blue dresses waving a white flag with an emblem of a red cross on it, led by the Moderator- Rev. Joseph Moti. A couple of men were among the reception, and they joined the women in singing and shouts of joys as we stepped out of the plane. Rev. Oruzo Lokine of the organization Serving and Learning Together (SALT) was at air strip as well, to welcome the team and the Nuer women. SALT graciously provided the RECONCILE team with a vehicle for transportation and accommodation at the SALT compound while in Pibor.



First sights- Murle women singing welcome songs as the RECONCILE team arrived at Pibor Air Field.

The MAF Aircraft made two other shuttles between Pibor and Akobo County to bring the eighteen Nuer women, plus six men whom they had selected to be a part of the initiative. The Murle women and men at the air field warmly welcomed their Nuer sisters and brothers with equal enthusiasm every time the plane landed. The singing continued, and kissing and hugging was shared equally and plentifully. The women

'shared' babies with each other. This act carried a very deep traditional peacemaking commitment. The women explained the significance this way: "My baby is yours and yours is mine, and now these are our children. They shall not fight against each other for they are now brothers and sisters, and now death amongst us shall stop." With this act the basis for four days of a productive peacemaking processes was set. Following this warm welcome at the air strip, the Nuer guests and their Murle hosts travelled into town in a colorful procession of singing and ululation all the way to the church. The singing and accompanying acts of hugs, holding hands and embracing continued to be expressed to the Nuer as they arrived at the church and met other women and men who had not been present at the air strip.



Murle and Nuer women exchange babies on arrival in Pibor County

Once inside the church, the Murle women began to wash and dry the feet of their Nuer sisters and brothers.

A short sermon to welcome all of was given by the Pibor parish pastor David Ngechmor.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE MEETING

Tuesday 9th February 2010

"I would like to repent of my sins before I open this meeting" stated his Excellency Akot Maze Adikir, Commissioner of Pibor during the official opening of the during the women's trust and peace building meeting. With this statement he set the conciliatory tone for all that was to happen at the women's meeting. In his speech, he noted that peace efforts by high level government officials planned at the end of January 2010 had failed due to political interference. "This meeting has happened because it's a grassroots initiative carried out by women through the church. This will bring real peace," he remarked. Commissioner Akot stressed the need for people to solve problems amongst themselves and not through political maneuvers by individuals who only claim to help but in reality are after political recognition.

“In the old days, conflict between the people was settled by bringing a white cloth (representing truce or surrender) and talking about the problem until a solution was found. But now, because we feel the old ways are not worthy anymore we wait for outsiders to come and save us,” he remarked. He noted that conflicting parties don’t realize that the politicians whom they have hope in keep their children and wives safely away from the conflicts which they incite and are not being affected by the attacks. He lamented the fact that Pibor County had been wrongly labeled as a place where nothing good comes out from except death. “All communities have a bad side and a good side but how come Pibor has none? If counties were to be assigned colours, Pibor would be assigned black because it is said nothing good comes from this place. It has reached an extent where it is said that if you are traveling and stop in Pibor for a night and the next day you are still alive, when you go home celebrate because you have just survived something big. Today I’m happy that all of you are here to witness and experience life in Pibor. You will go back to your homes and testify that Pibor is not as bad as they say and the people are trying to make a difference in their lives. That is why when I was informed that it is the women doing this I was very appreciative because women are more intelligent than men! A woman will do all that is in their power to protect and save her family and she has compassion for other mothers. We, men are quite selfish and sometimes easily marry again and have more than one wife, but a woman has one man and the children that she has given birth to. So mothers, God be with us and all of you as you start this meeting. May this be the start of building peace between our two communities.” With these remarks he concluded his speech.



Pibor County Commissioner H.E. Akot (centre in suit) shakes hands with Nuer women representatives after the official opening.

The Moderator, Rev. Joseph Moti, opened the meeting by reading a brief chapter from Matthew 5:9. Which stated; ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons

of God.' He explored this message, thanked everyone for coming and commended them for the roles they were playing in being the peacemakers of Pibor and Akobo Counties.

Milcah Lalam, Programs Manager of RECONCILE, then introduced the facilitation team from Yei. The team comprised of: Violette Nyirarukundo Mwenedata, Executive Secretary of El-Ezer Ministry in Rwanda and also the main facilitator, and Piath Alapayo Manyang from Rumbek, Lakes state-southern Sudan the rapportuer. On behalf of RECONCILE, Milcah expressed gratitude for being part of the wonderful women's initiative for peace between the two communities. She thanked the women for being courageous to go ahead with the meeting in spite of the fears about the security in Pibor, and the failure of a similar meeting for chiefs and government officials in Akobo County at the end of January 2010. She urged them to keep watering the seeds of peaceful co-existence which they had planted by having this meeting.

William Nyoun Thep, one of the male delegates accompanying the Nuer women, presented greetings from his Excellency Commissioner Goi Jooyul of Akobo. In his welcome speech he stated "We have great faith that this peace process started here today by the women will be a successful start of dialogue for the two communities".

Mary Nyakuoth spoke next on behalf of the Nuer Women. "We came to ask questions, to get answers and listen, to stop our children from dying", she began. "We came without fear because our children are already dead. This is our first reason for coming", she said. "Our second reason for coming is to carry a message from our commissioner to your commissioner. We asked him 'why are our children dying?' He said 'I don't know.' We asked him again 'Tell us you don't want us to give birth to children anymore because they are all dying?'" Then, Mary turned to Commissioner Akot of Pibor and asked him the same questions above. She concluded by stating "We want to live in peace, and pray that this meeting we have come for will bring authentic and lasting peace".

Tabith Baaza spoke on behalf of the Murle women. She praised God for allowing this meeting to take place. She expressed their happiness and joy for receiving the Nuer delegation. She said that they were praying for a long time for it to happen. 'Every day from 4-6am they meet at the church to pray for peace. This is an answer to our prayers'. She recalled, "When the problem in Lekwangole (this was the first in a series of ethnic violence which occurred between the Nuer and Murle in 2009) happened, we asked 'why are our people doing this to us?' We had nothing to do but pray and God has answered our prayers by bringing our sisters from Nuer to us here." She continued to relate how they felt after the Lekwangole attacks "What hurt us most was the deaths of the children, especially one woman who had only one child which was killed and she can never get another one. That is why when you arrived we brought our children to you." She concluded, "We want to live in peace with you and we want this message to reach your commissioner in Akobo. We shall praise the Lord if this peace meeting succeeds. We will be happy when our children stop dying. This meeting is an answer to our prayers. May we trust in God to sustain this process of peace between the Murle and the Nuer."

“WE ARE ONE IN JESUS”

Facilitator Violette began the meeting by sharing the theme scripture selected for the women’s meeting, which was Ephesians 2:11-22: “We are one in Jesus.” In this passage of scripture, Paul stresses that God wants reconciliation between the Gentiles and the Jews. This is because in Jesus they have a new identity. They are all one body united by God through the cross. Facilitator Violette explained how the passage is applicable today, “There is a similarity between the Jews’ and Gentiles’ history and ours. Like them, we (Murle and Nuer) have a history of that time ‘before salvation’ and now we need a time of ‘after salvation.’ We have the same past:”

- We were first separated from Christ
- We were excluded from eternal life
- We were foreigners to the covenant and it’s promises
- We were without hope
- We were without God

But now in Christ we need to seek the same present:

- We have been brought near God
- We have peace with God
- We are one in Christ
- We are restored with God through the cross.
- We all have access to the Father by one Spirit
- We are no longer foreigners
- We are fellow citizens with God’s household
- We are built on a strong foundation
- We are a Holy Temple in the Lord
- We are dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit

Using John 10:10-‘Jesus came that we might have life and have it to the full but Satan (*the thief*) comes only to steal and kill and destroy’- Violette helped the women to ponder on how Satan robs and destroys all good aspects of life that they have in Jesus. “Satan wants to kill Jesus in us. He kills in the following”, she stated.

- ❖ Truth- we start believing lies
- ❖ Trust- we become suspicious, fearful and defensive
- ❖ Love- we become absorbed with our own interests and stop caring about the needs of others.
- ❖ Peace and security- we have fears, anxiety, inability to relax, feel safe or sleep well.
- ❖ Hope –we don’t see God’s plan in our lives, no future, no motivation, n energy to work for change
- ❖ Dignity-losing true humanity. Satan wants to devalue us he wants us to be like him
- ❖ Righteousness –when we lose God’s moral standards for our society, this opens the door to every form of wickedness, no distinction between right and wrong. We lose courage to resist evil. We give in to fear, hatred and pride
- ❖ Justice: injustice creates anger and the sense of indignation in our hearts. Mounting anger often explodes into violence.

- ❖ Faith: for Christians faith is the key to everything. Satan wants to take away this key. Without faith we can't get salvation, love of God, hope for the future. If we've lost faith in a loving God, we've lost everything.

Satan has been at work in every nation and every ethnic group. This has built a dividing wall of hostility. Because of this our communities are deeply wounded.

Reflections from the Murle and Nuer Participants

Facilitator Violette asked the women to share what Satan has robbed from them. They shared the following:

1. Satan has taken the love in our community and replaced it with hostility.
2. They have lost their faith and hope.
3. The conflict that had started in the Garden of Eden has continued until now. So that our communities have no peace until now.
4. The Devil has taken peace by removing the Spirit of forgiveness.
5. Satan has taken away our dignity so that we don't know who we are.
6. He has brought the urge for people to kill themselves without fear for the consequences.
7. Mistrust has risen among the community so that people are always suspicious of each other.
8. The blessing that God gave Adam and Eve that they should go to the Earth and fill it has been taken. Now we are finding it hard to give birth, and those that are born don't last long.
9. Satan is influencing the children so they think that change is bad and the younger generation is causing havoc. This unrest removes the harmony the people are trying to work at in the community.
10. Our faith has been removed and replaced with ungodliness, so that even on Sundays people fight. An example of this is when the Nuer attacked the Murle in Lekwangole they came on Sunday- a sacred day for worship, and the same happened when the Murle attacked the Nuer in Marieng.
11. The people have become unconcerned with themselves and the people in the community. Whereas in the old days people would take care of each other and even punish the wrongdoers, the community now does nothing if something wrong is done.



The women praying together after the reflections

STANDING IN THE GAP

After the women and accompanying men shared what Satan had robbed from each individual and ethnic community, Violette began a session which she called *standing in the gap*. "Like Daniel who prayed on behalf of his people, let us stand in the gap. This means:

- Recognizing that what my people did was wrong
- Recognizing that the other group was wounded
- Regretting what took place and crying out to God for mercy
- Commitment to living out a different spirit.

All the participants then gathered around the room holding hands in one big circle. This was accompanied by singing and playing of the drum. One woman and one man from both communities were called upon to pray and confess the sins on behalf of their communities.



Nuer and Murle women and men standing in a circle around the room holding hands, singing and praying together

The next part of the peace process was accepting forgiveness from God. Scriptures which make pronouncements of words of forgiveness such as 1 John 1:9, Isaiah 1:18 and 2 Chronicles 7:14 were read. The participants were then asked to bring their pains to the cross. Small groups were then formed, being placed according to those who could understand each others' language. The women were encouraged to talk about the pain they had experienced and how the inter-ethnic conflict had affected them, and go find symbols to represent their pain which they would bring to the cross. Those who felt that the memories of the harm done were still 'fresh wounds' or were not yet able to talk about their pain were asked to just ask for prayers. The groups were then encouraged to pray for each other. This was so that they could understand and bond with both communities and realize that they all experiencing the same senses of loss. Praying together was to help bring back hope to each ethnic group with each other. Some of the symbols of pain that were placed at the cross were: a burning charcoal piece, a dry animal bone, broken glass pieces, dry twigs, and water in a bottle. The women were not asked to share the meaning of the symbols due to the sharing which had already taken place in the smaller groups. The cross was placed at the front of the meeting hall. After the women brought each an item symbolizing their pain, the Moderator was asked to pray for each and everyone, and for healing of the pain they have experienced. This marked the end of the second day of the women's meeting.

Wednesday 10th February 2010

An opening prayer was said. Then Luke 23:26-29 was read, and Pastor David Ngchamor of Pibor Parish reflected on the prophecy in this scripture where Jesus foretold the pain which women would experience in the days after the Romans attacked Jerusalem. "We are so alike with them right now, and the time of weeping is happening in Sudan because the loss of children and men has befallen us and mothers are now mourning. What can we do to stop the crying of mothers in Sudan?" he queried. He concluded the sermon by stating "Now is the time in which we need to review the culture and its contribution to the violence. We need to stop this at all cost and hope for a better future".

PIATH'S TESTEMONY

Piath Alapayo, who was documenting the meeting, gave her testimony as a Sudanese woman- a university graduate from the Dinka pastoralist community of Rumbek. "My name is Piath Alapayo. I have three brothers and am the only girl. As mothers from Sudan you must know what that means. It means if I get married probably only one of my brothers can get married with the dowry my family receives for me. So what will happen to the other two? Will they also go around raiding and maybe get killed in the process; or will they stay without getting married?" She continued, "So my father told me, 'Everyone has to look after himself.' His idea was that if I get married for 250 cows as dowry (one of the highest number for a bride), but still come home everyday telling my dad that I need this or the other, or that my children are hungry, sick or need clothing, what will be the use? It means that my whole dowry will go back into feeding myself and my children. Therefore, he sent me to school; so that I will be able to work and take care of myself, my family and later in life, even my own parents. When my uncles heard this they were not very pleased. They said 'she is wasting time. Bring her here and let her get married and we get our cows.' Now that I have finished and they understand the importance of education they told me 'Stay in town and help us.' Piath concluded, "I see that you are a step ahead of my uncles and have started taking your children to school. What I want to say is continue to do so for yourself and your children. I'm telling you this because you are mothers. If my mother had tried to convince my dad otherwise, I wouldn't be here talking to you today, but my mother stood by my father and helped me in any way she could. If my mother had told my father 'let our daughter stay home, there is no need to send her to school; she can get married,' I would already be married. In our village in Rumbek they say that a mother holds the whole world in her hands. I'm telling you now that you're not just holding the future of your daughters and children in your hands, but the future of your community and the whole of Sudan in your hands".

Violette summarized Piath's testimony by telling the women that they are 'the main molders of their children's life into what they will become in the future. The teachers just supplement on the foundation they have already laid,' she concluded.

VIOLETTE'S TESTIMONY

Violette also gave a testimony of how marriage customs of Rwandese—who are also pastoralists like the Murle and Nuer communities—are similar. “In our culture the dowry for a girl was many heads of cattle. At present we are still bringing and taking 100 cows, even if in reality it is only one cow. The culture has changed because the way of living has changed,” she explained. (*The women laughed when she said that her dowry was just one cow.*) “In the past, the times were good and cows in plenty, but as the Genocide over took Rwanda in 1994 we had to flee. We left everything behind- our wealth, property and everything else that we owned. We went to Nairobi as refugees, but because I was educated I was able to work and support my family. When we fled, it was me, my husband and my six children. The real wealth is not what you have at the moment but what you have in your head,” she concluded. The women applauded the two testimonies for a long time and even broke into song.

The sessions of the day were based on 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27-‘we are one in Jesus. Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is part of it’ (verse 27). Facilitator Violette explained the verses in-depth and in-line with the peace process. We are from one body and we need to unite.

- We are all baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.
- We were given all the same one Holy Spirit, so what unites us is greater than what separates us.
- God made everything perfect so that there would be no division in the body.
 - Its parts should have equal concern for each other.
 - If one part suffers the rest of the body suffers along with it.
 - So it is also that when one part is honored the whole body is honored, and every part should rejoice with it.

‘We are the body of Christ,’ she concluded.

HEALING OF LEPROSY

In the afternoon session Violette began by posing a rhetorical question “When does it happen that one part of a body suffers and the rest of the body does not feel it?” She stated the following:

- When the body is paralyzed.
- When the body is with leprosy.
- Finally, when the body is dead.

She noted that in the Bible leprosy is compared with sin, and sin finally brings about death. There are two ways of dealing with conflict. The first is to come together and talk about it and look for a solution. The second is the negative way, in which you come together and eliminate people involved, but do not eliminate the problem. The Chinese have a good proverbial saying: ‘before you go and avenge yourself, build two graves; one for you and one for your enemy.’ To tie the points together she stated “if we come together as we have done today it means we are taking a positive decision. We should be aware of each others’ differences and appreciate them in order to work effectively together. Being one body means that if I step on a hot coal my hand will not look at my

foot and say 'deal with it, it's your problem.' But the whole body will be concerned. In the same way let us all be one body and be fully united. A body missing its part due to leprosy is not able to fully function. The hands and legs that it needs are not able to help him. Even when we are gathered here and feel that some should not be a part of the body, we then limit ourselves to work fully effective. So I ask you how can the Murle celebrate when the Nuer are crying, or how can the Nuer do the other way round? It is because there is a disease in the body. It is because there is death in the body," she noted.

"But in Jesus there is hope! That is why yesterday we confessed our sins, so that we may be healed and be united as one body," she stated. "What is God's desire for the church?" She asked the women rhetorically. She then explained as follows:

- Its members to be healed; receive God's comfort and then comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- Jesus is the best doctor. He can transform us so that we become "God's people."
- God wants to break down every dividing wall.
- God wants the church to be a healing community.
- God wants the church to be a community of love.
- God wants the church to be a family.
- God wants the church to be a source of hope—hope for change now, hope of Heaven.
- God wants the church to be a prophetic voice to the community and to the nation.
- God wants the church to be the light.

Violette then led the women in building the one united church of Christ together using paper for sculpting. Each woman brought the symbol of one stone while singing went on. At last the one church expressing the unity of the two communities was built, and prayers of joy were offered.



Violette placing the last piece of stone on the symbolic church built together by the Murle and Nuer women

Thursday 11th February 2010

The final day began with a word of prayer by Maria Adokthodo from the Pibor Parish church. The following scriptural texts were also read to express God's promises and blessings upon the women's peace efforts:

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Revelations 3:20.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up, do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:18-19.

"My spirit, who is on you and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their decedents from this time on and forever' says the Lord." Isaiah 59:21

To conclude the sessions of the meeting, Milcah led the participants through a session where they were divided into smaller groups and asked to make plans on the way forward after the meeting. The questions to guide their discussions were:

- ❖ What can each one of you do to build peace in our communities?
- ❖ What can the women that didn't come to this meeting do?
- ❖ What can the church do to support you and establish the peace?
- ❖ How do you want the government to support what you have started today?

The responses they gave became their resolve to commit to peace and the recommendations they suggested for the church and government. (See annex 1)

Final Remarks by Women Representatives

THE NUER REPRESENTATIVE

Mary Nyakutho Dak walks around the room sweeping the floor and singing a Nuer folk song. Another woman follows her closely behind and picks up the dirt she is sweeping from the floor and puts it into a container. They both do this for a while and then the rest of the Nuer women join in singing. A lot of ululation and shouts of Hallelujah's fills the churches where the meeting is being held. Then she straightens up and explains what we just observed: "The reason I'm sweeping is to remove all the bad things that Satan has put before us. We have now collected them in this container and we shall burn them so that the bad things will not be with us anymore. In my heart I shall also remove the cloud that had covered the sun that was suppose to shine through. So now my heart is very clear and clean and it will shine bright like a white star which never changes."

THE MURLE REPRESENTATIVE

Mary Adokthodo reads from Matthew 5: 14 16, which tells about how the Christians are the salt and light of the world. She says “I have read this Scripture to thank all the people that have come here, [who have taken] part in this meeting and made it possible for the two communities to come together; specifically the facilitators of RECONCILE, [who] have led the process so well... They are the light of the communities. They have come from afar to help make this day possible. The work that they have done is because we have a one God. Jesus has become our mediator. Now we can come together and look for a solution where others tried and failed. We have shared our children with the Nuer. The last request I have is that RECONCILE should push with all their might so that we can go to Akobo so that we may receive their children.” (*On hearing this both communities stand up and sing a song of worship.*) She concluded by stating, “I shall not speak more than this but I know that when Christians stand together for something it shall happen.”

THE CLOSING CEREMONY

THE MODERATOR of East Jonglei Presbytery Rev. Joseph Moti stated, “We thank God for the meeting that has taken place and how it has brought both communities together. This work, we could never have accomplished by ourselves. We are only 80 miles apart, but we still weren’t able to do this. We hear reports from what happens around us—that sometimes from both communities up to 700 people can be killed in 5-7 days. The book of Ecclesiastes says there is a time for war and time for peace. The time for peace and harmony has at last reached us. Now I urge both communities to pray that this time may reach to the fullest extent possible.” He requested all present to “remember each other in prayers, as well as non-believers, so that they may not bring any problems and for organizations like RECONCILE which are making a change.” He concluded by reading Romans 12:18, which ‘urges us to live at peace with everyone and not those that we choose.’

THE GIFTS

Rev. Moti then invited the women of Pibor parish to present gifts to their Nuer sisters and the RECONCILE team. The women come forward with beaded necklaces and bracelets of various colours, each with its significant meaning among the Murle. The gifts were made by the women of five of the seven parishes of East Jonglei presbytery. White beads with a streak of black signified the new generation of peace was given to the RECONCILE team. Facilitator Violette was given a special white beaded necklace of a cross with orange beads at its centre as the cross in it. She was also given a white bracelet with a streak of black. The cross, they explained, represents the sacrifice that the Lord has made for us. The significance of the bracelet was for her to remember the women and “never forget us” they said. “It should serve like a constant reminder that we should be peaceful people.” The necklaces given to Milcah and Piath represented their being peace bearers and peace bringers.

The Nuer women were given multi-coloured beadwork necklaces and bracelets whose meanings were explained as follows:

- We have made peace with each other and we will live in peace with one another.

- The blood of Christ binds us together as Christians- we promise to love one another.
- May this day remembered for generations to come- the women have brought peace to their communities.

The meeting concluded with the adoption of the resolutions, with prayer and singing.



The women in prayer for each other and their communities (left) and the gifts given by the Murle women to their Nuer sisters (Right)



The thirty six Murle and Nuer women and men in front of the Pibor parish Church at the conclusion of the four-day peace and trust building meeting

Annex 1

THE RESOLUTIONS

We, the thirty six women gathered in Pibor County, Jonglei State for the Murle-Nuer women Peace and Trust Building Meeting from 8th -11th February 2010 and twelve men accompanying us in this process, hereby commit and promise to do the following:

1. To continue promoting the spirit of humanity, unity and love displayed during this meeting.
2. To strengthen the peace process started at this meeting between the Murle and the Nuer communities through various avenues.
3. To pray about the continuation and involvement of all members of the Murle and Nuer communities in making peace between ourselves.
4. To share and encourage the spirit of love and unity and commitment to work towards peace with other community members not present at this meeting.
5. To be the light and the salt of our communities and be examples to follow as peace builders in our communities.
6. To protect our children from the violence between Mule and Nuer and bring them up to live in peaceful co-existence.
7. To organize meetings in our communities and create awareness about the different cultures and traditions of both communities.

We recommend the following:

To The Government

1. That the Government of Southern Sudan and Jonglei State open all the roads between Pibor and Akobo counties to facilitate free movement of people, goods and services between the Murle and Nuer.
2. That the commissioners of Pibor and Akobo counties make all efforts to join their hands and forge peaceful resolutions to the conflicts between the two communities.
3. That the Government takes the necessary steps to disarm all civilian in the communities of Jonglei state at the same time.

To The Churches

4. That the churches prepare for the reciprocate visit of the Murle women to Akobo county.

5. That the Moderator of Akobo Presbytery and East Jonglei Presbytery work closely together to support this peace initiative of the women to reach all the communities of Murle and Nuer.
6. That the church leaders encourage and support the government through the chiefs to mobilize the communities to co-operate in disarmament.
7. That the church in collaboration with the government opens schools for both communities to learn peaceful co-existence.

Signed by: ~~_____~~ MRS. TIPITHA CHIRUICE GIETH ~~_____~~ TAB
 Woman Representative from Akobo presbytery Woman Representative from East Jonglei presbytery
 Date: 11 Feb 2010 Date: 11 Feb 2010

~~_____~~ MR. WILLIAM NYOUN THEP ~~_____~~ REV. DAVID NGCHAMOR
 Representative from Akobo County Representative from Pibor County
 DATE: 11 Feb 2010 Date: 11 Feb 2010

Witnessed by: Rev. Joseph Moti Aguang.

~~_____~~ Moderator East Jonglei Presbytery Pibor, county
 Date: 11 Feb 2010

Mrs. Mwenedata violette Nyirarukundo
~~_____~~ Executive secretary of Ec. Exec. Ministry
 Date: 11 Feb 2010

MS. Milcah Lalam
Programs Manager, RECONCILE
~~_____~~ Mhalam
 Date: 11th Feb 2010