

**Discover News-sheet
for colleagues in Africa
March 2016
Making Peace I**



Dear Friends

Compared with its brutal past, today Uganda enjoys peace. In most places and most of the time. But some people lost their lives in pre-election violence. As the population is growing rapidly, conflicts over land are increasingly common.

Can Discover contribute to making peace? The following experience seems to say “Yes”!

**Resolving conflicts and making peace in North-West Uganda,
by Christopher Nyakuni**

Over the past few years I have worked in communities which have suffered conflict and violence. This has been very challenging, but I feel very encouraged by the ways that the communities have responded.

By running training events which have combined self-reliance in health with conflict resolution, many individuals have opened up, they have begun to communicate with each other and to shake hands, and peace has returned to the community as a whole.

My personal experience of building peace in a conflict situation is as follows;

1. I invite a total of about 30 carefully chosen representatives from both sides of a conflict to take part in a three to five-day workshop. As co-leaders of this workshop I invite colleagues who are skilful in leading groups and who already have the respect of both sides.

2. The workshops include two major topics:

a) self-reliance in health; this includes nutrition, hygiene and the use of medicinal plants to prepare herbal medicines. Activities include

sharing information and experience of medicinal and nutritional plants in the garden, the



A savings group also provides a means of reducing conflicts, because the group meets once every week and can discuss a wide range of community issues.

preparation of medicines such as teas and ointments, and purifying water with moringa seeds.

b) making peace and resolving conflicts. Activities include group discussions, sharing Biblical texts about peace and love, singing songs of unity, peace and harmony, and live testimonies.

3. Important aspects of speaking with people in a conflict situation are:

- a) **associating with and accepting without judgement** members from both sides of the conflict
- b) **drawing close to each of the conflicting parties and listening to them.**
- c) **allowing people to vent their anger** freely. I have seen that when people are filled up with anger without letting it out through such an organized event then they express it through violent actions.
- d) **being prepared to take their anger.** Sometimes they and turn their anger on me. I remain quiet, I acknowledge their anger and hurt and hold on to the truth.
- e) **looking for common ground** which can be a starting point for reconciliation.
- f) **being transparent with regard to any financial support.** If they suspect I am gaining financially from working with them, then trust is immediately broken.
- g) **being alongside people as they work out practical steps** which they can take in their communities in order to enable the communities to live and work together.

4. Following the workshop it is important to be available to the participants. They may have doubts and need reassurance, or people who were not invited to attend the workshop may be angry.

5. Radio talk-shows have greatly helped me to win public confidence and to encourage people in the community to believe in the possibility of peace.

A case study

Christopher conducts a lot of counselling, and sometimes gives health tips which can be extremely helpful, e.g. artemisia tea helps with alcohol dependency and HIV, and by this means stress in the family is often reduced. This was the case with a teacher and his wife who were both HIV positive. They fought a lot and the man turned to drinking. He lost a lot of weight. After the lady attended one of these seminars, she starting drinking artemisia tea and put on weight. Following further counselling, the husband also began to take the tea. He also put on weight, stopped drinking and managed to keep his job. The couple were reconciled, and can once again manage to pay the school fees for their children.

Do you have a similar experience that you could share?

Blessings,

Keith