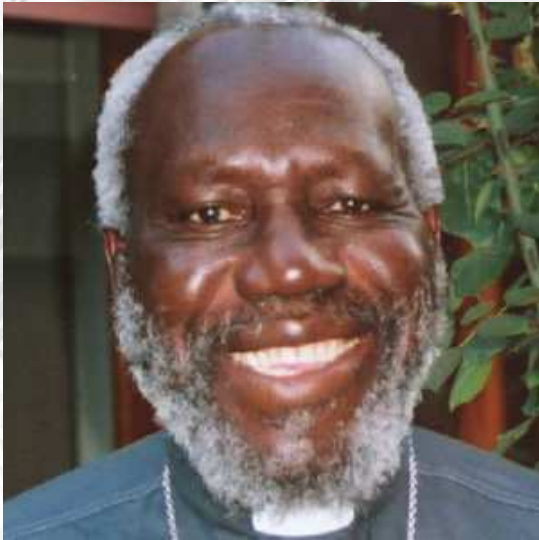


Mataa Kuron



News from the Holy Trinity Peace Village, South Sudan

Foreword by Bishop (rtd.) Paride Taban



Maata Kuron! (Greetings Kuron)

This is the first news letter from the Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron in South Sudan. HTPVK was started in 1999 as a demonstration farm by myself when I was the Bishop of the diocese of Torit. In February, 2004, when I retired from administrative duties and became Bishop Emeritus, HTPVK was established as an exemplary Village where people from different tribes, nations and religions live and work together to promote peace and development in their surrounding communities. HTPVK is a registered Non-Profit Organisation under the Catholic

Diocese of Torit. The village is situated remotely in Kauto Payam, Kapoeta East County, Eastern Equatoria State in the Republic of South Sudan along the road from Narus to Boma. The HTPVK is running various projects in the field of agriculture, education, health and peacebuilding while constantly maintaining and upgrading its infrastructure and service delivery.

The Peace Village is also an Oasis of Peace for the healing of the wounds of hostility caused by 50 years of conflict between South and North Sudan. While highly welcoming the independence of the Republic of South Sudan I also want to make clear that the Peace Village is now serving the two countries, the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. The Peace Village accommodates Christians, Muslims, Traditionalists and all human beings, sons and daughters of Adam and Eve and of Abraham.

Welcome in the Peace Village in Kuron!

Bishop Emeritus Paride Taban

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A good Harvest after two Years of Drought

The people in Eastern Kapoeta District are quite happy this year: The weather allowed a good harvest. Around Kuron, the sorghum, which is the staple crop in this area, is plenty and standing up to three meters high. Their granaries are full of sorghum and the surplus of the harvest sold to the peace village to get money to cater for other demands such as

their health needs. The long awaited rains left the land green; there is plenty of milk, animal fat and wild fruits.

The Peace Village agriculture department also benefited from the good rains this year. Its harvest contributes to the feeding of the Peace Village's inhabitants. Vegetables like tomatoes, gudura, okra, cowpeas, kales and amaratus cover part of the 40x50 metres of land. Maize and green grams were planted and harvested grown on the agriculture compound as well as the main compound. Ground nuts were also successfully grown this season.



The sorghum standing high around Kuron

For the last two years the Agriculture Department did not do as well due to drought that affected the entire Kauto and Naita Payams. The drought had made the Toposa and Nyangatom communities to migrate up to Ethiopia searching for water, pasture and food for their animals. This also resulted in economic insecurity and rivalry between different pastoralist groups. Morukomod Mountain, which is the grazing point of the Toposa community, was the only option of survival for the Toposa cattle. This year even up to December the surroundings of Kuron are still green.

Running for Peace in Moroto

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The Moroto Peace Race is an annual event that is being organized by former Kenyan athlete and 1500 medal winner, Tekla Lorupe. The event is conducted every year in the month of May in Moroto, Uganda, the Regional headquarters of the Karamoja

region. In this event youth warriors from different clans of the Ateker/Karamojong cluster participate with their government administrators and political leaders. This year the event was conducted on 27th and 28th of May whereby some 100 youth warriors from Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan were exposed and interacted with each other peacefully. Also they displayed their running potential and won valuable prizes. This, rather than relying on cattle rustling that has caused death of many youths leaving widows and children vulnerable. As part of the programme, testimonies by former notorious raiders could be witnessed by the participants. The converted raiders gave report how they found a way to leave a life in fear, raiding cattle and being on the run.



Participants celebrating with their trophy

The Ateker cluster groups that participated in this year event under the slogan “Stop Cattle Raiding” include: the Toposa from South Sudan under facilitation from the Kuron Peace Village and Losolia Rehabilitations and Development Association, the Turkana under facilitation from Lokichoggoi, Oropoi and Kakuma Development Organization (LOKADO) and the Dodoth under facilitation from Dodoth Agro-Pastoral Development Organization (Dado). The Karamoja Agro Pastoral Program (KADP) facilitated the participation of the Matheniko and the Jie of Uganda were organised by Kopein, which stands for Kotido Peace Initiatives.

The thirteen warriors and the three women from Kuron performed well in the long-distance run. For many of them it was the first time to experience bigger cities and to get into contact with their neighbouring tribes. Coming back to South Sudan they proudly displayed the trophy they received together with warriors from Narus for their good participation.

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Introducing the Staff of the HTPVK

In each issue of our newsletter we will introduce some of the staff of the peace village. This time we are introducing the team of the Community Development and Peacebuilding Department.

John Kato Fodomula

Peace & Sports Facilitator

“Kato” is the longest serving member in the Peace Team. He is a Sudanese by nationality and an Acholi by tribe. The 39 years old comes from Magwi County, but received his education in Uganda: his primary certificate from Kiryandongo Refugee Primary School in 1990 and his ‘O’ level after senior four in 1994. He later joined the Inter Arid Organisation in Uganda for their Youth and Culture for Sports Programme in Bweyale Refugee Camp. He worked as a secretary for the grinding mill for five years. After working for a de-mining company for one month, he heard about the Holy Trinity Peace Village, Kuron and joined the Peace and Sports Programme in August 2004. His family joined him after three years and he is today staying with his wife and his six children in Kuron.



From Left: Philip Emekwi, Uli Thum, Francis Lobongo, Nelson Nakom, John Kato

Philip Emekwi

Peace and Sports Co-ordinator

Phillip was born in the year 1978 in Kakuma division, in Turkana west district of Kenya. He completed his primary education in Loki Mixed Primary School in 1995 and joined St. Leo Boys Secondary school in 1996. He finished in the year 1999 and went to Gilo Teachers training college in 2003 and left 2004 and attained a two-years certificate in Early Childhood Development. Instead of becoming a teacher, he started working with Lokichoggio, Oropoi and Kakuma Development Organization (Lokado), a peace and development initiative working with the pastoralist Turkana, as a field monitor and peace and sport facilitator from 2005 to 2011. In April he offered his services to the Kuron Peace Village

Nelson Nakom

Peace & Sports Facilitator

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Nakom was born in Kaldo near Narus 24 years ago and is a Toposa by tribe. He received his Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education and in 2008 and then joined St. Bakhita Secondary School in Narus, South Sudan. Leaving school after secondary two he joined the Carter Center for their Guinea Worm Eradication Programme. From February 2010 up to March 2011 he worked as a field officer stationed in Kuron. Due to his previous work he knows the area around Kuron very well. He joined the peace team in August 2011 and among others he is responsible for the radio communication.

Francis Lobongo Ekaru

Peace & Sports Facilitator

Francis holds a Certificate in Community Development from Moi Institute in Kenya. After finishing his primary education in 2001 at Kakuma Mixed Primary school he proceeded to St. Kevin's Secondary School in Lodwar to complete his Kenya certificate of secondary education 2005. The 28 years old Turkana has been working with the Diocese of Torit for the Nanyangacor Development

Education Programme from 2009 until it was dissolved in June 2011. He came to offer his experience of working in Kauto Payam to Kuron in August 2011, leaving his wife and son back in Lodwar. Currently he is also finalising his third year of a Diploma course in Community Development.

Ulrich Thum

Peace & Development Advisor

35 years ago Uli was born in Augsburg, Germany. He came to Kuron nine months ago to advise and to work with the Kuron Peace Team as well as to assist in the organisational development of the Peace Village. Uli studied in Mainz and Hamburg in Germany and in Cape Town, South Africa. He holds a Master's Degree in Peace and Security Studies and a MA in Political Science/African Studies. Before coming to Kuron under the Civil Peace Service/AGEH Programme he worked as a Peace Programme Advisor in Ibadan, Nigeria where he also met his wife Liliane. She has joined him in Kuron and they are awaiting their first child.

35 Raided Cows Recovered and Returned to Owners

It was a small but meaningful step for the members of the Peace Team of the Holy Trinity Peace Village when 35 heads of cattle were handed over to their owners on the 31. August 2011. It was the outcome of hard work by the Kuron Team in their efforts to work against the rampant practice of cattle raiding between and among the

various pastoralist ethnic groups in south-eastern Sudan.

Toposa tribesmen raided the cattle from the Murle in Boma. The Toposa rely on the mountainous area around Boma ca. 75 km north of Kuron for grazing their cattle during the dry season, when their own territory lack water and pasture for their cattle. After

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returning back south with their own herds Toposa Warriors raided 94 cattle from their neighbours. According to information from the Boma administration the stolen cows of this incident, together with those of previous raids, add up to 270 heads of cattle. When the information of the raids reached Kuron, members of the Peace Team immediately consulted the local chief of Kuron and gathered members of the Peace Committees and the Community Policing Committees. The latter two bodies have been set up, trained and continuously animated over the last years to get involved in community matters concerning peace and security.

After gathering more information from the Toposa community and communication over the two- way radio with the administration and the police in Boma, the group ventured to one of the cattle kraals called Morokomot. There they addressed the kraal leaders and the warriors, making clear to them the severity of the situation. The relative peace the Toposa had enjoyed with the Murle for the last three years was severely in danger. The message that has come from Boma after the cattle raids was clear and threatening. No Toposa would set foot on Murle land in the following dry season. Known scenarios of counter attacks from Murle youths, raids and child abductions were called into the warriors' memory. Only some months ago the ongoing raids between Toposa and Jie had resulted in the burning of the Jie Village Nawoyapuru just outside of Boma. After Jie warriors raided back their impounded cows from the Police,

a revenge attack by soldiers, police and the Murle youths led to the destruction and displacement of a whole village. The Chief, the Kraal leaders and the Kuron Peace and Sports facilitators repeatedly demanded from the present warriors to return the raided cows in order to maintain the good relationship with their neighbours.

After two days of discussions and debates, 35 of the 94 cows could be recovered. As suggested by the Peace Team Members the recovered cows were brought to Kuron and kept under Chief Lotede's custody so as to avoid any other problems concerning the Murle cows. After further communication with the authorities in Boma they decided to send a group made up by SPLA, police, wildlife and the owners of the cows to bring back the cattle. On the 28th of August the group was met by a delegation from Kuron on their way. Two days later they arrived in Kuron and held a meeting with the local community. Being hosted by the Chief, the handover was arranged on the following morning.

Still, a lot of work for the community and the Kuron Peace and Sports facilitators remains to be done. More raided cattle must be recovered. Only such efforts can reinstate and secure the relative peace between the pastoralist communities. It was just some few days before the handover of the Murle cows, when terrible news reached Kuron. A long series of raids had led to fighting between the Murle and the Lou Nuer in Jongelei State causing the death of over 600 people and many more injured. The return of

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the 35 cattle might seem like a small achievement, but it might be such small

signs of peace and reconciliation that can avoid the outbreak of large-scale violence.

Kuron Youth Centre Reaches Completion, Pedestrian Bridge is Taken by River

On the morning of the 29th of May unbelievable news came to the compound of the Peace Village: The Pedestrian Bridge, connecting the Peace Village with the Youth Centre on the other side of the River, had been taken down by the river. Heavy rains in the mountains led to a fast increase of the water level and the swollen river, carrying a huge uprooted tree, had forced down the iron-welded bridge from its foundation.



The Kuron Pedestrian Bridge in the water

The bridge had been erected only one year ago with the support of the Dutch Embassy Khartoum and the Catholic Diocese of Rottenburg, Germany.

The destruction of the bridge is really a major set-back especially as it came at a point in time when the Youth Conference Hall had almost reached completion. The multipurpose hall has an elevated stage, two small storage or office rooms and is surrounded by a veranda.

Crossing the bridge the community could reach the Youth Centre directly, even when the River was full. It thus made the Youth Centre a lively place of interaction, especially for the youths. Surrounded by a lush and cool forest, the Youth Centre is and has become a place of recreation and enables many activities: warriors meetings and celebrations take place here, peace education with the youths, trainings and workshops are conducted and Sunday's church services are held here.

When Kuron will find the support to re-erect the bridge is still unclear, but our hopes are high that we will be able to take the step forward that we were taken back. We are counting on your help!!!

