

Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron
Donor Conference 21st – 24th January 2013
Report

Kuron Peace Village



www.kuronvillage.net

By Erling Saevareide, Director, HTPVK

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Acknowledgements

The HTPVK thanks the donor/partner representatives for their active participation in the conference and for their valuable support and contributions. Many many thanks are due to the Peace Village staff, who worked extremely hard to prepare and run the conference. HTPVK is grateful to Her Excellency Dr. Margaret Itto, Minister of Health, Eastern Equatoria State, for her attendance.

Executive summary

Background

Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron (HTPVK) was founded in 2004 by Bishop Paride Taban. Since its inception it has grown from an initiative run by a small group of committed individuals working informally together, to a formal NGO. The donor conference was the first formal meeting of individual supporters and representatives of organisations funding Peace Village activities. It was an important step in the development of the Peace Village into a well run NGO with effective partner relationships.

Participants

Key groups and organisations supporting the Peace Village were represented. The Peace Village was represented by its management team. The State Government of Eastern Equatoria was represented by the Minister of Health Her Excellency Dr. Margaret Itto. Conference facilitator was Mr. Oddvar Espegren of Join Good Forces, one of the partner organisations represented.

Aims and objectives

Aim

To build a joint understanding of what is required to secure the future of HTPVK

Objectives:

1. To help the HTPVK partners observe the village in operation
2. To enable the HTPVK to present improvements in organizational structure and the systems put in place for programme implementation.
3. To enable the HTPVK to present their implementation plan and budget for planned activities 2013 – 2015.
4. To invite partner feed-back on the presentations, and invite clarification and discussions to build a joint understanding of the HTPVK challenges and possibilities.
5. To encourage partners to express their commitments to the programme and their requirements for co-operation.

Programme

The programme was structured according to the conference objectives:

- Days 1 and 2 included representations of key HTPVK projects and reports.
- Day 3 consisted of presentation of the programme budget, invitation of preliminary pledges from partners and partner input into formation of the HTPVK Board.

Key issues discussed.

The input and the ensuing discussion were summarised. Seven key questions were identified and informed a general discussion, which centred around four overarching themes:

- Ownership and participation of the HTPVK programme by the Toposa community.
- Team building and improved management of HTPVK
- Funding and finance: long term commitment of donor/partners, funding gaps and cost effective Peace Village infrastructure support to projects.
- Board: composition and function

From the internal discussion among the donors/partners a fifth and overarching theme emerged, namely:

- Organisational form of the HTPVK: The HTPVK is both an informal community and a formal NGO. How can the tension be managed, and maximum benefit be gained from this combination?

Recommendations

Ownership and participation

- HTPVK develops a clear policy and focus for community participation and partnership
- HTPVK develops the instruments and mechanisms for a community needs assessment that underpins this policy

Management and Team building

- HTPVK identifies team building mechanisms to ensure integration of programme components and support for community participation policy.
 - Staff retreat
 - Staff training
 - Management structures to ensure communication and co-operation across programmes.
- Staff training will include strengthening practice to ensure implementation of personnel, accounting and procurement policies.

Budget and funding

- HTPVK develops mechanisms to ensure implementation of human resource, accounting and procurement policies
- HTPVK develops internal audit of accounts
- HTPVK develops a transparent system of internal invoicing for project use of PV resources.
- HTPVK presents a revised budget with cuts in expected expenditure
- Partners consider increasing funding, particularly in the following areas
 - Health
 - Administration/Salaries
 - Agriculture
- HTPVK develops bids for funding to close immediate and longer term budget gaps
- HTPVK continues to develop proposals for income generating activities.

Board

- HTPVK finalises proposal for a Board according to partners' input during the conference.

Conclusion

The conference was an important milestone for the HTPVK. The donor/partners provided valuable input and suggestions that will strengthen the Village's future work. The positive feed-back to presentations was a real encouragement to staff and suggested that the Peace Village is on the right track. At the same time the peace Village Management now has an improved understanding of the challenges ahead and how to address them.

Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron

Donor Conference 21st – 24th January 2013

Report

Introduction

Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron (HTKPV) was founded in 2004 by Bishop Paride Taban. Since its inception it has grown from an initiative run by a small group of committed individuals working informally together, to a formal NGO. The donor conference was the first formal meeting of individual supporters and representatives of organisations funding Peace Village activities. It was an important step in the development of the Peace Village into a well run NGO with effective partner relationships.

Practical arrangements

The conference was held in the Kuron Peace Village, Kauto Payam, Kapoeta East County, in Eastern Equatoria State, Republic of South Sudan. The village is isolated, with limited links to the outside world and with limited infrastructure facilities. Organising a meeting of 30 people in a place with limited power supply, modest accommodation facilities, limited internet connections and no telephone presents several challenges. Two planes were chartered to bring participants to the venue from Juba. It would have been easier in many ways to hold the meeting somewhere less remote, for example in Juba.

However, by holding the meeting in Kuron donor/partners were able to see for them-selves what Kuron stands for. They had the opportunity to meet a larger number of staff, experience the conditions under which people work and appreciate the challenges and opportunities that Kuron represents.

Kuron staff rose to the challenge of the meeting, and the practical arrangements seemed to go well. Staff vacated their rooms for participants and slept in tents. There was a good atmosphere during the meeting. The last evening of the conference a big party was given for participants, Kuron staff and members of the Toposa community. It was an evening not soon forgotten!

We are sending an evaluation sheet with this report to give participants the opportunity to feed back on the conference organisation and content. The returns will be considered carefully and used to improve the organisation of future events.

Aims and Objectives of the Conference

Conference aims:

To build a joint understanding of what is required to secure the future of HTPVK

Conference objectives:

6. To help the HTPVK partners observe the village in operation
7. To enable the HTPVK to present improvements in organizational structure and the systems put in place for programme implementation.
8. To enable the HTPVK to present their implementation plan and budget for planned activities 2013 – 2015.
9. To invite partner feed-back on the presentations, and invite clarification and discussions to build a joint understanding of the HTPVK challenges and possibilities.
10. To encourage partners to express their commitments to the programme and their requirements for co-operation.

Programme

Structure

The programme was structured according to the conference objectives:

Days 1 and 2 was organised to address objectives 1 – 4. This part of the programme consisted of presentations of HTPVK key projects, and project proposals, human resource and accounting policies, 2012 annual report and 2013 – 2015 implementation plan. This input and the ensuing discussion was summarised, and the summary informed a general discussion about key issues.

Day 3 was organised to address objective 5. This part of the programme consisted of presentation of the programme budget, invitation of preliminary pledges from partners and partner input into formation of the Board.

Programme summary, day 1: Input and discussion

On the way from the airstrip to the Peace Village:

- Visit to the Health Clinic
 - Ms. Grace Akwan, Head, Health Clinic
- Visit to the Vocational Training Centre
 - Fr George Ezatirale, Programme Advisor

In Kuron Peace Village

- Introductions and agenda
 - Mr. Aage Clausen, Outgoing Volunteer Director
- Presentation of the Peace and Community Development Programme
 - Mr. Uli Thom, Peace and Community Development Advisor
- Presentation of Annual Report
 - Dr. Ezra Remo Weleya,

Programme summary, day 2: Input and discussion continued

- Introductory remarks
 - Her Excellency Dr. Margaret Ito, Minister of Health, Eastern Equatoria State Government.
 - Bishop Paride Taban, Founder and Patron
- Personnel Management Policy
 - Mr. Andi Alfred, Administrator

- Accounting and Procurement Policy
 - Mr. Joseph Kalil, Finance manager
- Project proposal: A new outreach programme
 - Mr. Uli Thom, Peace and Community Development Programme Advisor
- Summary of presentations and discussions so far. Identification of key questions
 - Fr. George Ezatirale, programme Advisor, Dr. Ezra Remo, Deputy Director, Dr. Guro Huby, volunteer development consultant
- Presentation of 2013 – 2015 Implementation plan
 - Fr. George Ezatirale
- Discussion of main issues and questions
 - Mr. Oddvar Espegren, Join Good Forces, Facilitator

Programme summary day 3: Implications and recommendations

- Summary of general discussion
- Presentation of budget 2013 – 2015
 - Mr. Joseph Kalil, Finance manager
- Partner response to budget: preliminary pledges
 - Mr. Oddvar Espegren, Join Good Forces, Facilitator
- Meeting of partners: Composition and function of the Board, Budget issues and funding cycles, reporting requirements
 - Mr. Oddvar Espegren, Join Good Forces, Facilitator
- Closing remarks
 - Her Excellency Dr. Margaret Itto, Minister of Health, Eastern Equatoria State Government.
 - Bishop Paride Taban, Founder and Patron

Key questions and discussion

Key questions

Seven key questions from the discussion following presentations in days 1 and 2 were identified. These questions informed the general discussion at the end of day 2, and the discussion during the meeting between donors/partners. The questions and ensuing discussion centred around four overarching themes:

Ownership and participation

- How can the Peace village become a pilot and demonstration village from which others can learn?
- How can the Peace Village assess community needs?
- How does the Peace Village and partners involve the Toposa in all programme activities?

Team building and management of HTPVK

- How often do staffs in the Peace Village meet to discuss issues critically?

Funding and finance

- What are the long term commitments of our partners?
- How can the projects contribute to the Peace Village infrastructure in a way, which is cost-effective to them?

Board

- What is the best composition and function of the Board?

From the internal discussion among the donors/partners a fifth and overarching theme emerged, namely:

Organisational form of the HTPVK

- How can HTPVK and donors/partners manage the tension between HTPVK being both an informal community and a formal NGO and derive maximum benefit from the combination?

Discussion

Ownership and participation

Kuron as a demonstration project: “Outreach” and scale of outreach

The discussion about ownership and participation revolved around ideas of “outreach”.

The discussion was sparked off by the proposal for an Outreach Project, which was presented in terms of the need to address two key areas in the Peace village programme. One was issues regarding the active involvement of Toposa in Peace Village projects. The Toposa community surrounding the Peace Village have engaged in activities that support cattle herding and protection of cattle, namely the veterinary programme and the initiatives to reduce incidents of cattle rustling and develop peace and stability between the Toposa and their neighbouring tribes. The latter in particular has achieved impressive results, with the Toposa now actively participating and taking some responsibility for project activities. However, the Health Clinic, the agricultural and education projects still have a way to go to make the Toposa “own” and take some responsibility for the project activities. Whilst the number of consultations at the health clinic has increased, many Toposa use the clinic inappropriately. For example, medicines are often given to the cattle rather than taken as prescribed. The uptake of services offered by the agriculture demonstration project is modest and seeds and tools not always used. Very few Toposa children attend school, as they are needed to herd the animals and take part in village work. Girls are married off at an early age in exchange for bride wealth and the few that attend school are taken away before they complete senior primary education levels.

The other issue that might be addressed by an outreach project is the need to work across programmes to achieve synergy and increase effectiveness. Outreach activities are a way to address the aims of several projects at once.

The discussion that ensued concerned first of all the focus and scope of outreach. The Toposa are scattered across a huge area in which they move around. An outreach programme that aims to reach as big a part of the population as possible would require considerable resources in terms of fuel, manpower and time. More importantly, such an approach would take resource and attention away from the Kuron philosophy, which is to develop models and practice that are examples for others to learn from, both local Toposa and audiences further afield in the Southern Sudan and internationally. This approach means that the Peace Village needs to consolidate and improve work to engage the Toposa in the immediate Kuron area, and that people who are interested in this work will approach the Peace Village on their own initiative.

Outreach for what – community needs assessment

The various Kuron projects and activities have been initiated without an investigation into how different parts of Toposa society - men and women, older people and young people identify and prioritise the problems of daily life and livelihood that they face. With the plans to work across projects comes requirements for a community needs assessment so that activities can be identified that are meaningful to the Toposa. Moreover, it may be possible to identify activities that target several key aims of the Peace Village programme. Issues around education, health and agriculture are interlinked and revolve around the exchange of girls for cows in bride wealth, and the older men's control of this process.

How do we involve the Toposa - Outreach or partnership?

Two different models of "outreach" can be identified from the discussion. One involves taking services, practices and ideas out to the Toposa for them to use and apply, for example education, agricultural practices and health care services. The other involves working with the Toposa to identify issues that are important to them, that can be accommodated within the Peace village resources and the power structures of Toposa society, (i.e. which are acceptable to older men), and that can be addressed in partnership and through joint problem solving between Kuron and Toposa members. This tension was not resolved in discussion. However, in practice, combinations of the two approaches are likely to exist, and future policy and focus can be developed from existing practice.

It was resolved that a working relationship with the Toposa community is important and needed to ensure sustainability for the time when the Bishop is no longer there.

Agreement: There is a need to consolidate and improve work in the Kuron area, and to deepen relationships with the local Toposa, bearing in mind that the boundary between Kuron and neighbouring Toposa necessarily is fluid and some flexibility needs to be maintained.

Key challenge: Some lack of clarity remained about what "involvement" and "partnership" mean in practice, and the practical implications of Kuron's role as a demonstration project for others to learn from. This needs to be addressed so that effective practice of community evolvment can develop around a clear focus.

Team building and management of HTPVK

How often do Peace Village staff meet? Communication and collaboration across projects?

There appears to be limited communication and collaboration across projects. The volunteer Director who arrived 3 months ago found that the different departments work in isolated "siloes". The isolation is increased by demands for performance and reporting set by funders. With a movement towards increased integration of project activities comes the need to change management practice. The developing model of partnership with the Toposa also demands a clear and joint response from all staff in their dealing with the

Toposa, and team building is required to achieve a common focus and standard practice.

Whilst the HTPVK staffs were commended for the development of sound policies for personnel management, accounting and procurement, the need to ensure that these policies are implemented in practice was stressed. There was a request for internal auditing.

The need to nurture relationships among staff was stressed. Suggestions for change included time set aside for team building, such as a staff retreat. This team building can include training and also address the need to ensure implementation of personnel and procurement policies. Living and working in Kuron presents its own challenges, and staff's need for rest and relaxation also has to be addressed.

Agreement: There is a need for team development, staff support and training, and revision of management structures and practice. This is important to ensure programme integration and a joint approach to community development, and to build good practice regarding implementation of human resource, accounting and procurement policies.

The challenge remains to identify effective methods for team and competence building.

Funding and finance

Donor/partner commitment

Partner/donor commitment both in the shorter and longer term is needed for the continued development and improvement of the Peace Village as a demonstration project. The pledges for funding for the coming three years will cover half or less than half of estimated expenditure, and “donor fatigue” is a fact that HTPVK will have to take into consideration when planning future activity. It was stressed that this problem is not new. It occurs at the beginning of each financial year, and that the problem is solved by approaching additional funders, and by cutting or postponing activity. The need to increase income generating activity is constantly part of the planning. However, until a strong enough cash economy develops in and around Kuron to sustain the Peace Village the Village will to some extent be dependent on outside funding. A cash economy of that scale is unlikely to develop before the road between Narus and Boma/ Pibor is built and improved.

An issue was identified regarding funding cycles. Funding is increasingly locked in yearly cycles that run from end of December to January. This does not work well for the Peace Village, where work can only be effectively carried out in the dry season from November to April due to transport problems in the rainy season. Funding pledged in January usually takes two to three months to come through, by which time the dry season is almost over. When the dry season starts again in November it is time for report writing.

Common costs and Kuron's infrastructure support to projects

The Peace Village is taking measures to ensure recuperation of cost of infrastructure services it provides to projects – housing, transport and communication services. Internal invoicing of these services to projects is being introduced. At the same time, measures are introduced to ensure the quality and cost effectiveness of infrastructure, in particular buildings and communication. A volunteer engineer is being sponsored by Norwegian Friends to come to Kuron to supervise building and IT arrangements. This will help reduce cost of maintenance by improving quality and reduce costs.

Agreement: Funding has always been an issue for the Peace Village, and with donor fatigue and future shortage of funding this issue will loom ever larger.

Challenge: The gap between budgeted expenditure and real income will have to be addressed by the Peace Village and its partners. Identifying funding cycles that fit with the seasonal working patterns in Kuron is also needed. Income generation, including arrangements for internal invoicing and improved cost-effectiveness of Kuron infrastructure services will be a future priority for the Peace Village.

Board

Board composition and function

The existing Board has not yet met. The establishment of HTPVK as an NGO includes the establishment of a Board as a constitutional requirement. The conference was an opportunity to revisit the representation and function of the Board. This was discussed in the internal meeting of donor/partners.

The HTPVK management presented three possible models for the Board composition, and this formed the basis for discussion, which revolved around size, representation and function.

The main concerns were the role of a possible Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) representative, whether staff should be represented on the Board, representation from the Toposa community and the number of donor/partner representatives.

The Board as a policy-making body needs to guard against being hijacked by members with a vested interest in the work of the organisation. A member of government may draw the HTPVK in national politics in a way that is to the detriment to the organisation. On the other hand, a GOSS representative will be able to help with networking and contacts at national level and inform the organisation of relevant political developments.

Staff representation on the board would give staff a voice out with management, which will be important in cases of conflict. However, a staff member will also be bound by board rules of for example confidentiality, and Board membership can put a staff member in a difficult position vis a vis his or her colleagues. Another avenue of staff representation is via a reference group.

There was general agreement that the Toposa community needs to be represented.

There was some discussion about the number of donors/partners needed on the Board. With the issues around funding, a minimum of two members might be useful in order to ensure involvement and commitment. On the other hand, more than one donor representative would increase the logistical problems of attending meetings, unless one is based in the Southern Sudan. There was agreement that a smaller Board would be more effective and the decision to invite one donor/partner member was made by a show of hands.

There was some discussion about how to select the representative. Two approaches were identified. One was to appoint a partner who works within the Southern Sudan, and who can more easily attend meetings. Another approach is to select a representative with a long-standing relationship to the Peace Village and with good knowledge of the Village history and issues it faces. There was nobody who met both requirements, and it was decided to appoint a member with a long standing relationship to Kuron. .

Agreement emerged that a small Board with 5 members will be the most effective. Aage Antila from Norwegian Friends was elected as the donor/partner representative.

Challenge: the HTPVK needs to use the donor/partner input to present a final plan for the Board.

HTPVK: Community or formal organisation?

This discussion about the Board size and composition highlighted a more general issue about the organisational form of the Peace Village.

The peace village has developed to embody two very different organisational forms. It started out as a community of people who live and work informally together to promote the Peace village goals. It still functions in that way in many respects. On the other hand, the Peace Village is now an NGO with a formal structure legally enshrined in a constitution. People join the organisation as employees who are paid a salary and whose responsibilities to the peace village are limited and defined in a job description. Riding the tension between those two realities represents both challenges and opportunities. The lawyer who helped to draw up the constitution of the Kuron NGO recognized these issues and built in flexibility around both the form and function of the Board.

One way to maintain flexibility is to separate out an Advisory Committee from the formal Board. This committee can have as its function the safeguarding of the spirit of Kuron, whilst the Board has the legal responsibility and oversight of the Peace Village governance

The HTPVK management will Kuron is both a community and an organisation.

Challenge: How to ensure flexibility to draw on spirit and energy of the community and at the same time ensure good governance and transparency of a well run NGO so that funders and partners trust?

Recommendations

Ownership and participation

- HTPVK develops a clear policy and focus for community participation and partnership
- HTPVK develops the instruments and mechanisms for a community needs assessment that underpins this policy

Management and Team building

- HTPVK identifies team building mechanisms to ensure integration of programme components and support for community participation policy.
 - Staff retreat
 - Staff training
 - Management structures to ensure communication and co-operation across programmes.
- Staff training will include strengthening practice to ensure implementation of personnel, accounting and procurement policies.

Budget and funding

- HTPVK develops mechanisms to ensure implementation of human resource, accounting and procurement policies
- HTPVK develops internal audit of accounts
- HTPVK develops a transparent system of internal invoicing for project use of PV resources.
- HTPVK presents a revised budget with cuts in expected expenditure
- Partners consider increasing funding, particularly in the following areas
 - Health
 - Administration/Salaries
 - Agriculture
- HTPVK develops bids for funding to close immediate and longer term budget gaps
- HTPVK continues to develop proposals for income generating activities.

Board

- HTPVK finalises proposal for a Board according to partners' input during the conference.

Conclusions

Peace Village staff had worked hard to organise and run the conference. From HTPVK point of view, the work paid off. The donor/partners provided valuable input and suggestions that will strengthen the Village's future work. The positive feed-back to presentations was a real encouragement to staff and suggested that the Peace Village is on the right track. At the same time the peace Village Management now has an improved understanding of the challenges ahead and how to address them.

The practical arrangements seemed to work well, although we await participants evaluation responses before we commit ourselves fully on this point. The Peace Village has learned from the experience and will be able to run future events more effectively.

Achievement of objectives

The conference aim of building a joint understanding of what is required to secure the future of HTPVK was from HTPVK management point of view largely met. The donor/partners were able to see the Peace Village in operation, the presentations were well received and engendered much useful discussion, which raised key issues and went a long way towards clarifying them. The pledged financial commitments were insufficient to allow HTPVK to carry out the planned activities in 2013 – 2015, but we hope a compromise will be reached between budget cuts on the part of HTPVK, and increased pledges from donors.

HTPVK management thank the donor/partners for coming the long way to Kuron, and for their hard work during the conference. We will work hard to realise the potential we identified together for Kuron, and we look forward to welcoming our donor/partners back in three years to show the results!

Appendices

Appendix 1 Participants and organisations present

Eastern Equatoria State Government

Her Excellency Dr. Margaret Itto, Minister of Health, Eastern Equatoria State

Caritas International, Friends of Sister Emmanuela

Mr. Ward Tanghe

Diocese of St. Cloud, Minnesota

Ms. Rosanne Elisabeth Fischer
Mr. Mark Gerhard Trainor
Mr. William Arthur Voss

IKV Pax Christie, Netherlands

Mr. Freek Landmeter
Ms. Sara Ketelaar
Mr. Romano Lolem

German Friends

Mr. Udo Mechlinski

Norwegian Friends

Mr. Aage Antila
Ms. Marit Antila
Mr. Arve Danielsen

US Friends

Mr. Ed Resor

Join Good Forces

Mr. Oddvar Espegren
Mr. Tore Gullaksen

Mercy Beyond Borders

Bro Dan Emmanuel

Strømme Foundation

Mr. Moses Anyama

HTKPV Management

Bishop Paride Taban, founder
Ms. Teody Lotto Achillo, Liaison Officer, Juba Office
Ms. Grace Akwang, Head, Health clinic
Mr. Andi Alfred, Personnel manager

Mr. Aage Clausen, (from Norwegian Friends) Volunteer Director
outgoing
Father George Ezatirale, Programme Advisor
Mr. Milla Elizeous John, Head, Agricultural project
Mr. Joseph Kalid, Finance Manager
Dr. Ezra Remo Deputy Director
Mr. Erling Saevareide (from Norwegian Friends) volunteer director
incoming
Mr. Uli Thom, Advisor, Peace and Community Development

Volunteers

Dr. Chris Huby (medical doctor)
Dr. Guro Huby (development consultant)

Facilitator: Mr. Oddvar Espegren

Rapporteurs: Fr George Ezatirale, Dr. Guro Huby.

Appendix 2 Conference presentations

- Peace building and community development (*to be inserted*)
- Personnel policy (*To be inserted*)
- Accounting and procurement policy (*To be inserted*)
- Proposal for an outreach programme (*To be inserted*)
- 2012 annual report (*To be inserted*)
- 2013 – 2015 Implementation Plan (*To be inserted*)

Appendix 3 proposed 2013 – 2015 budget and donor pledges to date

USD	2013	2014	2015
Budget total	1 222 452	1 318 299	1 352 349
Pledges total*	750 000	430 000	301000
Funding gap**	450 000	880000	1 000 000

*Includes approximations and pledges for funds which do not cover budgeted expenditures.

** Approximations