
SPORT FOR PEACE PROJECT

Project Summary



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Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE)

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Sport for Peace

Project background. CECORE through the “Sport for Peace” project sought to strengthen social cohesion among and between refugee and host community youth in Adjumani district. The innovation had a human-centered design, as the perspectives of youth, communities, district and community leaders, and the Office of the Prime Minister were involved at all times, from needs analysis to project design, implementation and evaluation. Youth were at the forefront of the innovation, with special attention to out-of-school youth, former child soldiers and extremist youth. Through established community clubs, the project strengthened their capacity in non-violent approaches to conflict resolution through a 30-week Sport for Peace curriculum. Furthermore, the project trained 60 Peace Champions in peacebuilding and conflict transformation skills who were graduated into change agents to initiate youth-led community awareness activities like community peace dialogues, sport tournaments and theatre plays to improve the perception of host and refugee communities towards non-violent responses to conflict and youth participation.

Introduction and background: Adjumani district in West Nile Uganda borders South Sudan while hosting 235,900 locals and 214,257 refugees from South Sudan due to the atrocities committed in the South Sudanese Civil War that left deep socio-cultural scars among the population characterized by conflict among and between refugees and locals around land, leadership, political differences, services and resource availability and distribution, and domestic and sexual abuse. In addition, refugees are often unaware of boundaries between the refugee settlement and the host community land because of insufficient or unclear land demarcation¹. Issues like encroaching on host community land without permission have caused serious tensions, degenerating into violence and sometimes even killings of (most often) refugees. Furthermore, youth are prone to negative coping behavior, including alcohol and drug abuse, violence, suicidal behavior, self-neglect, and school dropouts. These continued to cause ill feelings and systemic hatred, resulting in fragile relationships. Peacebuilding efforts were therefore a critical need for youth in Adjumani.

In order to build sustained peace, social cohesion, youth participation, life skills enhancement and adoption of non-violent resolution of conflict management, Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) secured funding from the Dutch Relief Alliance

Innovation Fund to deliver a one (1) year pilot project aiming at strengthening social cohesion among and between refugee and host community youths in the area.

The concepts of Peace Champions and Sport for Peace

1. The concept of “Peace Champions” stems from CECORE’s project “Building peace through youth and young adult *peace champions* in post-conflict communities to prevent re-radicalization”. It was piloted (2019) in Kasese, Yumbe and Kaabong and scaled up in Kaabong, Kotido and Lira districts. The gradual approach appeared very successful in preventing youth re-radicalization. Former soldiers/warriors, children born in captivity (18-35y) first received a Training of Trainers’ training in peacebuilding and conflict transformation skills. They became “Peace Champions” who trained and persuaded fellow youth and gradually transformed the attitudes of peers and communities.
2. Sport for Peace concept is also one of the many CECORE’s engagement approaches targeting the youth. Youth were trained as Peace Coaches who transferred knowledge and skills to their peers through weekly “Sport for Peace” activities bringing together different youth. It successfully promoted a culture of peace among opposing youth groups in the settlements. The concept also engaged out-of-school youth

Project target group(s)/beneficiaries in terms of gender, age groups and other demographics

This community-based project directly targeted 876 refugee and host community youth (15-24y, 50% female) living in and around the selected refugee settlements of Adjumani district: Maaji II and Agojo. Particular attention was given to those most vulnerable, including adolescent girls, youth with special needs, unemployed and out-of-school youth, former child soldiers, radicalised and violent youth. We ensured a good mix of these groups for inclusivity and to avoid being perceived as an organisation that rewards perpetrators of violence. These youth were engaged in the 30-week curriculum through 16 trained Peace Coaches (20-24y, 50% female). Additionally, we targeted to improve the perception of 1800 host and refugee community members towards non-violent responses to conflict and youth participation. To this end, we trained 60 Peace Champions (15-24y, 50% female) on peacebuilding and conflict transformation for peace advocacy and community sensitisation, and 35 key community actors (local government and settlement leadership structures, traditional and religious leaders) on peacebuilding, conflict transformation and conflict early warning and early response.

Summarized project interventions. Under the project, 876 youths were organized into community clubs and engaged in regular sports for peace activities to strengthen their capacity in non-violent approaches to conflict resolution through a 30-week Sport for Peace curriculum. There was engagement of youths in regular sports for peace activities to promote social cohesion and peace building among and between refugee and host community children and youths. Children and youths who demonstrated high level social cohesion and peace building skills were graduated into change agents organized under the peace champions group. These Peace Champions did initiate youth-led community awareness activities, like community dialogues, sport tournaments and theatre plays, to improve the perception of host and refugee communities towards non-violent responses to conflict and youth participation. They in essence promoted and advocated for peace and social cohesion within and among their respective communities.

The project envisioned that the wider community would also play a crucial role in promoting and maintaining social cohesion and peace building. And therefore, community members (mothers, fathers, caregivers and other community members) were engaged by their own children (the youth) in awareness activities where they were oriented on non-violent conflict resolution approaches and the need for youth inclusion and participation in peace processes.

Expected outcomes.

Outcome 1: Refugee and host community youth have enhanced their knowledge and skills of non-violent approaches to conflict resolution.

Outcome 2: Host and refugee communities show improved perception towards non-violent responses to conflict and youth participation

Project Description

“Sport for Peace” aimed at strengthening social cohesion among and between refugee and host community youth in Adjumani for the period between March 2021 and December 2021. The project Theory of Change (ToC) was under pinned on a series of interlocking interventions. The project concept contended that the key factor driving social cohesion is healthy relationships among youths, community groups and institutions across dividing lines, which are based on collaboration and inter-dependence. To achieve this, there was a need for an informed population, with the opportunities to participate in decision making and the development of its own communities. Involving young men and women was important in strengthening social cohesion and preventing violence. Specific theories of change for the implementation of this initiative were Youth participation and engagement: If the youth have opportunities to be engaged in decision making in their communities, alongside educational and economic opportunities, they are less likely to engage in violence and more likely to actively contribute to strengthening social cohesion. Adult institutional support: If youth leaders collaborate with adults, including those from

institutions such as schools, police and others, they are more likely to establish positive leadership space. Development of peacebuilding life skills: If youths build and develop their life skills, then they are likely to actively seek out opportunities for positive engagement and adoption of non-violent conflict prevention and resolution approaches

The project has had among others the following results;

1. It is a historical fact that the Dinka and Nhuer communities have had ceaseless squabbles that in most cases degenerate into tribal clashes in the refugee settlements. With Sport for Peace project implementation in these communities involving the youth from all tribes it has elicited mutual co-existence as the formerly rival tribal youth work together and the ultimate outcome is that this is binding the two communities as one people. This is evident as youths of different tribal origins worked together and mobilized their friends as they practiced the nonviolent conflict resolution approaches they learnt from advocacy and sensitization as well as club training activities.
2. The engagement of youth in their respective clubs yielded fruits. Mamwi James youth participant Maaji noted that “I can now listen patiently to friends expressing themselves because each of us in the club is free to talk and we are treated equally though we are urged to appreciate diversity of opinions”. This evidently indicates a transformative change in behavior in James. He acquired positive attributes in listening, patience, appreciating diversity of opinions and taking turns.
3. While we trained the peace champions, Maaji II RWC had this to say, “...for the first time the youth in all the six blocks and all the different tribes in the settlement plus those from host communities have come together to jointly and freely share and work together”. He further appreciated the project design that, “...you ensured that the project beneficiaries were selected from all the refugee and host tribes (including from clans/blocks that are known to be troublesome), and gender which is a unique approach” an indication great success in terms of healing the once bad relationships between the host and refugee communities.
4. Baako Immaculate a Peace Champion Maaji II noted; “as we moved as a team of youth, we had high support from parents and very many youths and parents were attending to our door to door peace sensitizations willingly. We developed good rapport with the local leaders from different blocks, they pledged to support us whenever we are conducting our activities as we talk about non-violent response to conflict”. Reports from the communities are that it is an unusual act seeing youth of that age (15-24 years) talking about peace to young and old people in their communities.



FIGURE 1 PEACE CHAMPIONS TRAINING



FIGURE 2 WARM UP ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS



FIGURE 3 DOOR TO DOOR PEACE SENSITIZATION BY PEACE CHAMPIONS IN AGOJO SETTLEMENT