



PROGRAMME FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN AFRICA
(PROCMURA)

Christians and Muslims

Focus on:

Peace and Development

&

Youth and HIV/AIDS

EQUATORIAL REGION OF SOUTHERN SUDAN, JUBA

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	3
Introduction	4
Day I	5
Opening Ceremony	6
Address by Chairperson for the Day	6
Conference Rationale.....	7
1. Negative Solidarity	8
2. Negative Religious Expansionist Policies.....	8
3. Politicisation of Religion.....	9
4. Translating Good Precepts of Religion into Good Practice	9
Address by Deputy General Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC)	10
Address by Deputy Director Da’wah Section in the Southern Sudan Muslim Council (SSMC).....	11
Address by Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS)	12
Address by Guest of Honour: Adviser to the President of Southern Sudan on Religious Affairs	14
GROUP DISCUSSIONS	21
Day II	21
Group I	22
Group II	23
Group III	24
Draft Communiqué Reading	28
Closing Ceremony	28
Recommendations	29
Conclusion.....	30
Annex I	31
The Southern Sudan Christian & Muslim Religious Leaders Communiqué (Juba Communiqué)...	31



Acknowledgement

For the second year running Mission 21 has kept faith with us and provided us with funding to carry out a conference for Christian and Muslim Leaders in Southern Sudan on Peace and Development and a workshop for Christian and Muslim youth on HIV/AIDS.

We are grateful to Mission 21 for their special support for PROCMURA's programmes in the Sudan. We need not overemphasize how much Sudan needs peace. What we need to emphasize though is that the conference that was carried out was different in many ways. It brought Christian and Muslim leaders together to inculcate in them a spirit of positive tolerance as Southern Sudan was preparing for their historic referendum for self determination. On the Christian and Muslim youth on HIV/AIDS, the importance of the joint conference has to be seen against the background of the vulnerability of the youth, a good number of whom returned to Southern Sudan following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005. Others had also come in from neighbouring countries to prepare themselves to vote at the referendum.

As we thank the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) leadership of the Equatorial Region of Southern Sudan especially Mr Tiberious Lecca and his colleagues, so do we thank the leaders of church and Mosque as well as the youth for their participation and ability to discuss openly.

To God be the Glory for the Great things He hath done.

Joy Wandabwa

Team Leader; Finance and Administration



Introduction

A generation rife with memories of war, a younger generation fresh with experiences of refugee status and a new generation with new ideas, all at the cusp of a new Sudan and a new era. The civil war in Sudan left the southern part of the country ravaged and grossly under developed. Teeming tension between Christians and Muslims has become the norm given that the war took on a religio-political face. However, looking yonder is a referendum that will determine the future of the Sudan. Is the international community going to usher in the newest state? Until January 2011, we have to wait and see. In any case, the decision remains a Sudanese decision all we are is spectators to this magnificent historically altering period.

That being said, we have a responsibility to ensure that peace and development underline the emotions, notions and goals of a new era. We as Africans and stakeholders in the peace process in Sudan cannot just sit idly by and let the country degenerate into conflict let alone lose the valuable strides it has made so far with regards to imbuing a semblance of peace in the South specifically pursuant to the Comprehensive Peace Process (CPA). The right to self determination is the lifeline of the Sudanese people and we look at it in these terms. An opportunity to re-evaluate and make a decision that will propel them into the future uncertain as it may be. The gist of it all lies in safeguarding the principles of peace, justice and reconciliation. Good governance underlies these principles but the prerequisite here is peace. Without a shadow of doubt, the conflict in Sudan had acquired a ubiquitous religious face that seemed to subsume the other factors that fuelled the conflict to cheer on the civil war. As such, building bridges between Christians and Muslims is one of the ways in which peace can be successfully sustained in the country and in Africa by extension. The principles governing the relationship between the two need to go beyond dialogue to: learning to live with one another, respecting the diversity of the other's religion, faithfully adhering to the tenets of Islam and Christianity and harnessing these diversities to build a stronger nation.

Replicating a Peace and Development Conference in the Upper Nile State of Southern Sudan in 2009, in Malakal, PROCMURA organised a similar Conference in the Equatorial Region in Juba in September 2010. The Conference in embracing the tenets of peace for development brought together: government officials, members of the civil society, and Christian and Muslim religious leaders, to deliberate over salient issues concerning how to foster peace and peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims. Quintessentially, it is understood that capacity building at the grassroots as relates to peace is vital in setting in place ideas and structures which can be transferred and shared across the country.

The pages that follow this introduction capture the spirit and essence of the conference. It records what individual leaders representing the Church, Mosque and Government said, and what groups agreed to put forward during the workshops

Johnson Mbillah

General Adviser



CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONFERENCE ON PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT



Group Photo of Christian and Muslim Leaders who attended the Peace and Development Conference in Juba, Southern Sudan

The stage was set for a Christian-Muslim conference in Juba, Southern Sudan, the theme “Christian Muslim Relations for Peace and Development”. This period in Southern Sudan marks a crucial turning point for the people given that they are set to hold a referendum in January 2011 that will either see Southern Sudan secede or unify the people of Sudan under a common banner.

PROCURA in this forum for Peace and Development between 20th and 23rd September at the Juba Grand Hotel, sought to root peace among Christians and Muslims before this critical period in their history. It is without a doubt a tense time for the Sudanese people but also one of opportunity, an opportunity to architect their future in the way that they deem fit. A chance to set an example to the rest of the world by addressing differences and coming out stronger to embrace a peaceful future from a conflict ridden past.

Day I

Arrival of guests at the Peace Conference was sort of a spectacle with the rain pouring hard for a couple of hours before the beginning of the conference and threatening the very proceedings for the day. We are meant to understand that Mother Nature sometimes is brutal to the transport network in Sudan a healthy fear given the continuous non-stop rains that pounded Juba.

This however did not dampen the resolve for the Christian and Muslim leaders to congregate at the Juba Grand Hotel to hold the Peace Conference.

Indeed neither PROCMURA nor the United Nations (UN) had envisioned that the day to observe World Peace and call for Prayers would have been blessed by showers from above.

The participants congregated at the Munuki Hall with the Master of Ceremony, Rev. Edward Laku Waiwai, Education Officer at the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) welcoming all the participants to the



Mr. Tiberious Lecca addressing participants

Conference. He also took the time to recognise the dignitaries who were present and wished all and sundry fruitful deliberations. Rev. Waiwai then proceeded to invite the Chairperson for the session Mr. Tiberious Lecca Chairperson for the session.

Before Mr. Lecca took the podium prayers were offered from both Christian and Muslim quotas, beseeching the Almighty to bless the proceeding of the conference.

Opening Ceremony

Address by Chairperson for the Day

The Chairperson, Mr. Tiberious Lecca begun by welcoming all the participants, he recognised all the dignitaries present specifically mentioning the Adviser to the President on Religious Affairs, Tijok Hadir, General Adviser for PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Mbillah, Deputy General Secretary, Sudan Council of Churches Rev. Mark Akec and Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS), Dr. Daniel Deng Bul.

He said that this was a great occasion to savour peace. He singled out Dr. Mbillah as a stalwart in Christian-Muslim relations across not only Africa but the world over. He revisited the pouring rains issue saying that they were indeed a blessing to Southern Sudan and the conference in particular. He urged Christians and Muslims to live peaceably among themselves because they are brothers and sisters.

He was keen to note how the conference had coincided with the United Nations International Day for Peace and call to prayer, 21st September. PROCMURA which had envisioned the interspersing of the dates was poised to make the day a truly momentous occasion.

He wound up by urging the Christian and Muslim leaders to participate freely and openly as this was the forum for them to engage one another for Peace.

Conference Rationale

The MC then invited Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, General Adviser of the Programme for Christian-Muslim



Rev. Dr. Mbillah with mic. addressing a cross section of the Church and Mosque leaders.

Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), to take the podium and give a brief presentation on PROCMURA and the conference rationale.

Rev. Dr. Mbillah began by observing protocol in which he commended all the dignitaries for taking the time out of their busy schedules to take part in this crucial conference on ‘Christian and Muslims for Peace and Development.’

He stated that the main goal driving the Christian and Muslim leaders at the conference was that of a need to foster peace, collaboration, reconciliation and repair peace where it is broken. Africa and therefore Africans are a religious people, this is a vital asset to the people in African and more specifically for Southern Sudanese.

At this critical moment in Sudan’s history he cautioned the leaders from denigrating the other’s religion (Christian and Muslim), he asserted that religion is an emotive issue and denigration or castigation only serves to spark feelings of hatred and fosters retaliation that in most cases degenerates into violent conflict.

He insisted that it was then vital for Christians and Muslims not just to talk about one another but rather evolve to talking to one another. In these circumstances therefore Christian and Muslim leaders can and

should play mediatory roles, especially so during conflicts. However, he cited that there is a prerequisite to playing the mediatory role, or better still the role of an agent for peace. Christians and Muslims and their adherents have to be at peace before propagating the message of peace. He gave the example of Ghana when the President Jerry Rawlings and subsequent President Kufuor had been at conflict; Christian and Muslim leaders took it upon themselves to try and defuse the situation by playing a mediatory role and thus brought the two political leaders together. This was certainly a great move from the Christian and Muslim quarters; nonetheless, President Rawlings cut everyone short before the talks began saying that what sort of peace were the Christian and Muslims embarking on when they were not themselves at peace. He reprimanded the efforts as baseless and instructed them to go and make peace among their followers before they addressed the politicians. He then stormed out of the meeting. One cannot talk peace if you do not have peace!

He then delved straight into the challenges associated with Christian and Muslim relations in Africa.

1. Negative Solidarity

What is this notion of *Negative Solidarity*, he begun. Christians everywhere belong to the *Body of Christ*. Likewise Muslims everywhere belong to the universal *Ummah*. When the elements of discord are sown in far off lands Christians and Muslims in Africa fight proxy wars in the name of religious solidarity. We thus import conflicts to Africa. This is the classical example of Negative Solidarity.

He then posed the question, *Are we therefore African Christians and Muslims or Muslim and Christian Africans?* Is the Sudanese immediate neighbour less vital than a universal solidarity? In which case are we human beings who happen to be Christians and Muslims or are we Christians and Muslims who happen to be humans? For the sake of peace and development, devoid of the deep theological implications, the vital nexus for peace and development is our common humanity and citizenship.

2. Negative Religious Expansionist Policies

The question that begs here is what needs to be done?

There should be a clear avoidance of these *Negative Religious Expansionist Policies*. These policies are not imagined but exist within churches and mosques in the neighbouring countries.



Now that Sudan is opening up its borders to more and more people, there is a need to look at these policies and shun them.

Polemical preaching based on chastising the other should have no place in the Southern Sudan community. *“Avoid preaching how bad the other religion is but rather preach on how good your own is...”* he emphasised.

3. Politicisation of Religion

Religious political parties only serve the interests of its adherents and of the religion, as compared to a national interest. One should steer clear way from such political parties.

Another aspect of politicisation of religion is manifest when politicians appeal to religious affiliations to garner votes. These exclusive tendencies only breed resentment and contravene the principle of competence.

4. Translating Good Precepts of Religion into Good Practice

He put forward a bold statement in this particular topic.

‘Religion is not the problem but rather religious people’

As Christians and Muslims we need to embrace our religious differences and live with them in peace and not pieces. Religion sets forth grand precepts of peace and the acceptance of diversity in society. Both Christianity and Islam acknowledges the existence of plurality in the knowledge of God. The scripture however was being misused to call for conflict while in fact the core principles of Christianity and Islam are rooted in peace, *Shalom* and *Salaam* respectively. It is religious people who interpret their scriptures and traditions, while violating context to promote strife.

He concluded by saying that the conference needed to work for the holistic development of the Sudanese people, however the effort had to be two fold, from both the Christian and Muslim quarter.

Rev. Waiwai took the podium thanking Dr. Mbillah for his brilliant and thought provoking presentation. He then proceeded with the programme schedule and invited the Deputy General Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) Rev. Mark Akec to share a few words with the participants.



Address by Deputy General Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC)

Rev. Akec began by welcoming everyone to Juba, and thanked PROCMURA for organising such a forum where Christian and Muslim leaders can engage one another freely and openly.

He pointed out how important the forum was, saying that Christians and Muslims have had a lot of problems as far back as he could remember.

In 1956, he said, there was the taking over of mission schools, an abolishment of Christian and traditional language teachings.

In 1958, Islamic teaching was reinforced in schools. Some churches burned down and Christian clergy lost their lives.

In 1962, missionaries were expelled from Southern Sudan and the Church was left vulnerable. The clergy that was left did not have the necessary capacity to carry on running the Churches work.

In 1964, over 1000 Muslim faithfuls lost their lives as a result of conflicts with Christians, numerous Churches and Mosques were burned to the ground. This carried on through 1965 and in 1966, there were mass killings in Juba and Wau.

In 1968, the call to implement Shariah law in Sudan sent a clear message to the Christian fraternity that all was not well, however it was not implemented.

Although currently Sudan's legal code draws much precedence from Shariah which is Islamic law. At one point, the government had declared Jihad in Southern Sudan which served to sever ties between Christians and Muslims.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), on the other hand is bridging the gap between Christians and Muslims.



*Rev. Akec, Deputy Secretary
General of the Sudan Council
of Churches (SCC),
addressing the plenary*

Developments towards regularising Christian and Muslim relations were manifest with the creation of the Interreligious Council. Unfortunately, the Council did not serve its purpose and only served to spread propaganda, notably not a single resolution was sent to the president. The council became a political tool to manipulate religious people for political ends.

Shariah still operates in the Northern states but the CPA allows for certain freedoms within the North. The Southern part of Sudan stands at a crucial point in the history of Sudan, a transition, discovery and transitional stage if you will. Rev Akec insisted that the truth needed to be laid bare for all for the reconciliation process to be carried out. He referred to the occasion when the Muslim Council was formed in Southern Sudan, dignitaries from all over were invited including the president who agreed to all the demands from the Muslim quarters on one condition; that there be a separation of the Muslim Council from politics.

However, as Christians we know that Islam is not just a religion but a way of life meaning that separation from politics might not be at all possible.

These he insisted were just some of the crucial turning points for the Southern Sudanese vis-à-vis Christian-Muslim relations.

In a bid to address openly and frankly the issues put forth, Rev. Akec said that rebuilding a new Sudan can only be hinged on opening a new chapter in their history. This new chapter has to be accompanied by a change in heart, which echoes and effervesces reconciliation and forgiveness. There is a racial and religious divide among the people which are in dire need to be addressed. With these he wound up.

Next on the podium was Sheikh Juma Said Ali, Deputy Director Da'wah Section in the Southern Sudan Muslim Council, who spoke on behalf of El Tahir Bior, Secretary General, High Council of Muslims in Southern Sudan. He began his presentation by conveying apologies on behalf of the Secretary General who could not be present because of a pressing matter that arose at the last minute.

Address by Deputy Director Da'wah Section in the Southern Sudan Muslim Council (SSMC)

He thanked Rev. Akec for the historical background of the situation in Sudan, saying that to go forward it was important to ascertain where one is coming from.



He also thanked Dr. Mbillah profusely for his presentation saying that the issues had clearly been illuminated and what was left now was for action to be taken towards rooting peace in Southern Sudan. He asserted that this was the opportune time for Southern Sudan to forge a new destiny.

He commended such an initiative to organise for such a forum, where Christians and Muslims could come together to interact and discuss such pertinent issues. This engagement should be fostered and replicated to root the principles of peace and development across Southern Sudan he concluded.



*Sheikh Juma Ali, Deputy Director
Da'wah Section of Southern Sudan
Muslim Council (SSMC)*

Rev. Mark Akec then took the opportunity after the presentation from Sheikh Juma Said Ali to welcome the Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (EPS) Dr. Daniel Deng Bul.

Address by Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS)

The Archbishop begun by thanking PROCMURA and the SCC for organising for this auspicious occasion, where Christians and Muslim could talk and engage one another on matters of peace and collaboration for development. He underscored his point by saying that it is important to respect those who adore God because the differences among them was in how they adored God.

On a personal basis, he stated that he respected Muslims irrespective of those who are misusing Islam. He said that politicians had a tendency of misusing religion to garner support and impress others. But as Christians he reiterated, we cannot fall into the trap of politicians and view Islam as they did, and by extension have negative perceptions about Muslims. Christians cannot be moved into fundamentalism as the United States priest who threatened to burn a copy of the *Qur'an*.

Such acts only push either side to extremism and seek only to fuel hatred and conflict. Religion and a thorough knowledge of it can be used to transform humanity.

PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN

He urged Christians and Muslims in the Sudan to lead the country to peace and let politicians dictate neither their pace nor the agenda. He added that God Almighty created both Christians and Muslims and allowed them not to live in isolation but as neighbours. Therefore, they should not allow human beings to change God's will of diversity.

A mission was now upon Sudan to forge a path of coexistence between Christians and Muslims that would serve as an example for all to emulate. Sudan needed to open a new phase and chapter in its history. He insisted that as Southern Sudanese they can no longer be a harboured bitterness towards the past. But rather, an embrace of this bitterness and turning it into something positive can be a perfect example of conversion of energy and redirecting it to another more positive aspect related to the enhancement of peace. He reiterated that Southern Sudanese had embraced a culture of coexistence that was not about to crumble under the pressure of importation of conflict or wane because of outside influence. Heading towards a referendum should signal a new beginning. As Southern Sudanese the opportunity to teach Christians and Muslims everywhere the value of peace is rife and upon them, he concluded.



Archbishop Dr. Daniel Deng Bul of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (standing) addresses participants of the Peace and Development conference.

The Chairperson then took the microphone and invited the Deputy General Secretary of the Sudan Christian Council, Rev. Akec to usher in the Guest of Honour, Rev. Tijok Hadir, Adviser to the President of Southern Sudan on Religious Affairs. Rev. Akec begun by apologising on behalf of the Minister, H.E. Agnes Kwaje Lasuba, who was away attending to government business which came up at the last minute. However, he said that the guest of honour was just as capable to add a lot of value to the function as an individual serving the government and specifically assigned to matters religious. With that he welcomed the Guest of Honour, Rev. Tijok Hadir.

Address by Guest of Honour: Adviser to the President of Southern Sudan on Religious Affairs

Rev. Hadir begun by breaking down the meaning of his name, he said the *Tijok* was *Shilluk* for *Work of God* and *Hadir* is *Arabic* for *Present*. Together his name spells the work of God is present with us. The principle which should guide the proceedings he added. He gave a brief history of himself and how he came about to be appointed to the position of adviser. What stood out is the fact that he was only just recently appointed to the post but he has had substantive relations working with both Christians and Muslims. In particular he mentioned a radio station which he was a part of, where a show was run



Rev. Hadir (standing in suit) shares a light moment with participants

appealing to both Christians and Muslims to live in peace. He said that despite his young demeanour, he believes the thirst and urge to learn more is what enriches his position and character as an adviser and it is why he was there.

He said he was elated at the prospect of having both Christians and Muslims seating together and discussing peace and development, two core issues in Sudan at the moment. He said that such a forum provided such a wealth of knowledge that needed to be tapped into by

all who attend, he said that he was probably the one to benefit most from all the stalwarts present at the occasion. He praised Ghana and Dr. Mbillah because Ghana has become a picture of success and peace, worth being emulated across the African continent. He said it was no wonder Barack Obama, President of the United States, visited Ghana first in Africa after he was sworn in as president. It is then by extension that Dr. Mbillah, from Ghana, is associated with these noble precepts set from Ghana. For that, a great appreciation was among them for his ability to bring forth this great message of peace and development to the people of Southern Sudan and specifically Christians and Muslims collaborating to achieve it.

In his address he said that a misplaced element was swiping wide among adherents of both Christianity and Islam, where individuals had it somehow in their heads that they could fight for God, the irony of it is how we can fight for the maker. He said that the Bible clearly states that vengeance belongs to the Lord, so no one should claim to be defending God.

He said that the policy of the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) is to embed religious rights among the people of the region. There should be a freedom to preach and build worship centres all over Southern Sudan.

He lamented that unity between northern and Southern Sudan has been unattractive. However, lessons are taken from the past and as Christians (majority in the South) the notion of retaliation towards Muslims based on past atrocities cannot be entertained even for a second. He said that this was a chance to breed mutual coexistence, Christians and Muslims can and should go ahead and create a positive competition, because Christians are not full in Churches nor are Muslims in Mosques. Therefore, an increase in both groups, in terms of numbers is inevitable thus making mutual coexistence imperative.

He said that in Sudan, religious parties do exist, but these exclusive parties really pose a threat to national integration. The question as always remains, what happens to those who do not affiliate with the religious practices and beliefs, are they any less citizens? He hoped that this situation will change for the better.

He went on to say that, he was an ordained Presbyterian Reverend holding a political appointment. He said but the difference is stark, given that he now disseminates his duties very differently from when he was a Reverend in a congregational situation.

He pointed out that when the war between the north and south erupted some people had a wrong understanding of what it was all about. Some individuals went out to fight Islam and Arabs in general but the top leaders from Dr. John Garang, General Salva Kiir and others worked hard to convince these individuals that they were fighting the system and not the religion. He said this alluding to the forthcoming referendum, asserting that the referendum was not meant to be an avenue for prejudice and oppression but rather, a nation at the precipice of a new beginning.

Information is therefore key to the referendum process, not only to current generations but also to future generations to enable them understand the entire process and the decisions hitherto.



Rev. Hadir took the moment to urge the different religious institutions to register with the government to foster greater relations and continued interactions. He said that the Government of Southern Sudan was now urging its people to pray for the government because they were indeed in trying times. It is apparent to everyone in the region and country that the referendum has brought about a lot of anxiety. More important than the referendum process is to ensure that peace is maintained, because the country cannot afford to degenerate into violence again. With these he concluded the opening address and officially declared the conference opened.



Participants break bread together during the pause

Mr. Tiberious Lecca then took the podium and thanked Rev. Hadir and all the dignitaries, as well as the other participants, for attending the conference opening and for the invaluable input from the speakers. He then broke off the session for refreshments and a group photograph after Bishop Enoch Tombe and Sheikh Juma Said Ali had offered words of prayer.

The afternoon session was reconvened by Rev. Waiwai the MC for the conference duration. He then invited Rev. Dr. Mbillah to elaborate on the issues raised in the morning session, specifically his presentation on *'Christian and Muslim Relations for Peace and Development'*.

Rev. Dr. Mbillah began by giving a historical brief of PROCMURA from its inception to its actualisation. He said that PROCMURA was formed at a time when African Countries were agitating for their independence and a need for unity in spite of the ethnic/tribal and religious differences was paramount.

He pointed out that the quest for Christians and Muslims to live with their religious differences in peace and to work towards the development of the new nations and humanity was part of the reason for the formation of PROCMURA. He said that PROCMURA works with all church denominations and all Muslim groups, but is subsumed by none.

Elaborating on this, he said that Africa's religious landscape was initially composed of Christians, Muslims and African Traditional Religions (ATRs) practitioners. However, that landscape has changed and other religions have come to the continent increasing Africa's religious diversity.

This diversity can be embraced and harnessed for peace he said. Religion is a major factor in the African's life and is relied on, on a daily basis and influences decision making. He reiterated that God is all knowing and therefore allowed for religious plurality to persist. Both Christianity and Islam support this particular assertion in their respective sacred texts.

Important to the theme of the conference is the embedded principle of peace in both the Bible and the Quran. If Africa can work on these carefully then Africa can have lasting and sustainable peace. Religion is a touchy subject which draws very sharp reactions whenever it is criticised. What is worth revisiting is the concept of humans fighting for God the Creator which is unthinkable in our view. As devotees of our respective religions we should not fight in the defence of God because it beats the purpose of Him being all loving and all powerful.

In addition, Religious extremism, which is on the ascendancy in Africa, has necessitated the need to cooperate on more issues to avert extremist tendencies and break stereotypes and prejudices in society. Religious Leaders are often called to action, to play intermediary roles during conflicts because those who fight bear the religious titles of one group or another e.g. David, Ibrahim and so forth. It is not in good faith to abandon our faithfuls claiming they are not a true reflection of the faith. A confrontation of the issues and challenges is the way to finding solutions to existing problems, not only within the faith but also without it. Therefore proactive measures need to be embraced not just a sit back and adopt *laissez faire* attitude waiting for the worst to happen before any action is taken.

He proceeded to revisit the issues he had outlined in the Conference rationale.

- 1. Globalisation/ Importation/ Internationalisation/ Exportation of Conflicts**
- 2. Translating Good Precepts of Religion into Good Practice**

He went on to say that Christians and Muslims had a breed of ***Gatherers and Scatters***. He said that in the efforts to enhance Christian and Muslim relations there were those who make conscious efforts to bring together Christians and Muslims. As are there are those who wish for nothing more than to separate them. He said that it is easier to destroy than to build and come January 2011, whichever way the referendum goes; peace has to remain rooted in Southern Sudan.



There is nowhere in Sudan where Christians and Muslims do not live side by side, it is therefore imperative that they work together. He wound up the session and turned it back to plenary for a question and answer session.

The first comment came from by Bishop Enoch Tombe, who asserted that the Sudanese do not have an identity crisis. Muslims and Christians first and foremost treasure their Sudanese identity. The unifying factor here is the fact that they are both facing a similar problem, which is how to synchronise their Sudanese identity with their religious identities.

Secondly, the issue on Politicisation of Religion. Northern Sudan insists that they cannot do without Shariah which then segregates Christians in the North. State and religion are one but in the south, there is an embrace of diversity. This is a trend that should carry on fostering peace in the South where a clear distinction exists between state and government on one side, and religious identities on the other.

He raised concern over the upcoming referendum saying that in the event of a separation during the referendum; bitterness might persist. This bitterness emanates from the treatment of the Southerners in the past and now the Christian majority South might oppress Muslims in retaliation. In this case, Muslims would not enjoy equal rights.

There is a hovering shadow of fear among Muslims because of the atrocities committed by Arab Muslims from the North. This led to a blanket condemnation of all Muslims, and in fact Muslims in the South have started being referred to as *Jalaba (Arab)*, a somewhat derogatory term for Southern Sudanese Muslims. There needs to be a clear distinction between Islam (the religion) and Arabism. He inquired whether PROCMURA had a mechanism for safeguarding peace, because peace was not only constituted by the absence of war. Ignorance he insisted is a major problem among the people. He asked what PROCMURA proposes to set in motion to build and establish peace?

Another concern was raised by Sheikh Juma Said Ali, who said that sometimes Christians feel threatened when Muslims refer to Jesus. The Sheikh said that they also have Issa in their Scripture and it does not amount to them stealing/owning Jesus. Such kind of misunderstandings, sometimes add the ingredients for the recipe to disaster and conflict. He added that the subject of Blacks and Arabs has always been a contentious issue. The question is who is an Arab and who is a Muslim?

Rev. Dr. Mbillah took it upon himself to respond to the questions as best he could. First and foremost, in addressing the question of Arabs and Muslims he said that, far reaching perceptions have it that an Arab is not a question of the colour of the skin but rather of the tongue. He cited a tradition and late discussion that concluded that anyone who can speak Arabic (fluently) is an Arab. This was a political approach which was meant to Arabise and not necessarily Islamise. As long as the language was spread and one was fluent then one was considered an Arab. In 1976, at the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) now African Union, there was an issue concerning the acceptance of an African lingua-franca. The North Africa and the Maghreb countries argued that Arabic should be the language of the African, while the East Africans argued for Swahili. All colonial languages were ruled out, the likes of English, French, Portuguese etc. The arguments put forth for Arabic were that the Maghreb region spoke Arabic, Hausa in West Africa has Arabic, Swahili is a mix of Arabic and Bantu, not to mention that all Muslims who are



Rev. Dr. Mbillah responding to questions asked at the plenary

spread all over the continent learn Arabic, therefore it only made sense that they adopt it as the African lingua-franca. A participant then asked whether Africa was being Arabised or Islamised. President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe then spoke up against Arabization, arguing that Africa was not up for recolonisation by Arabs.

Dr. Mbillah said that the deliberations pointed that Africa does not fear Islamization, but rather Arabization. Only Muslims can answer this question on Arabization, because they best understand it.

On the issue of colour, Dr. Mbillah said, colour does indeed play a role in the conflict in Sudan. He said for instance the question of colour prevails in Darfur as opposed to the question of religious affiliation. There however are clear instances where Christians have waged wars against Christians and likewise Muslims waging wars against Muslims, World War I and the Iraqi-Iran War epitomizes these incidences of war. However when these (religions) came to Africa, the African was asked to embrace the universality of religion, unfortunately at the detriment of his/her Africaness. He urged Christians and Muslims in Southern Sudan not to replicate the bad relations of the North and South. Southern Sudanese are generally the same except for tribal and religious differences. Therefore any move to set Southern Sudanese against one another should absolutely be rejected.

PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN

We should see one another as one people routing for a common destiny in God and not allow tribal or religious differences to tear us apart.

Rev. Dr. Mbillah clarified that there is a difference in doctrine when it come to the reference of Jesus in the Bible and in the Quran. Muslims view him as a prophet, and based on the teachings of the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed, Jesus was a symbol of how people could be led to the straight path. Conversely, Christians believe that Jesus the Christ is the son of God, was crucified and on the third day resurrected, He is also one in the Trinity. The Christian faith is based on the above, which is quite different from the Muslim fundamental belief. Some Muslims use this information to attack Christian beliefs as do Christians use information on the *Qur'an* to attack Muslim beliefs. Some Christians sometimes refer to Mohammed as the Antichrist; on the other hand some Muslims say that Christians worship 3 gods. Christians and Muslims need to avoid polemics, and look at the essence of the messages contained in their respective faiths, peace being a pillar of these faiths. Humans are prone to error, understandably, however we cannot allow ourselves to get carried away and led astray by misconceptions and prejudices and end up in conflict.

Wielding great influence comes with great responsibility, therefore religious leaders need to embrace context as a very important factor in the lives of not only their adherents but also of the community at large. In which case when Muslims say the Salaam is more than peace but rather an embodiment of wholeness and when Christians echo mutual sentiments when they refer to Shalom, then they should be prepared to live by these philosophies.

On the question of Shariah law, Dr. Mbillah argued that the totality of it all is complicated, but as a general admission there were many problems associated with introducing religious law in a non-homogenous society. There is bound to be discontent and disgruntlement. However, the Sudanese cannot be given a crafted road map on which they should tread but rather they needed to look at the intrinsic values of coming up with the answers themselves and tested against each other. With these remarks the session was closed and the participants indulged in a cup of tea.

When the plenary reconvened Bishop Tombe took the podium and insisted on the fact that the conflict in Sudan had not been a religious conflict. In fact, he added, one of the strongest Commanders of the Sudanese People Liberation Movement (SPLM) was a Muslim.



The problem is historical, Africans already had established traditions and norms, when external influence descended upon the continent, these norms and traditions were contravened by new age thinking and ideologies thus changing the status quo and leaving in its wake a sour taste. Religion should be separate from state and equity among all a clear driving principle and especially so in government institutions. He added that the breed of Islam in the South is quite different from that in the North. The South has embraced a more tolerant form of Islam as compared to their Northern counterparts. Rumours are however rife in the North that following a secession vote, Christians there will be slaughtered. He



Group I making their presentation

insisted that the true teachings in Christianity and Islam needed to be followed to the tee so as to realise the quintessence of faiths rooted in peace and love. Therefore a total separation of state and religion is the only way to go, it also serves to dispel any fears of oppression and counter oppression, based on retaliations.

Coexistence needs to be fostered from a tender age; children need to be involved in affairs of appreciation of diversity, that way a culture can be spawned and transmitted to norm status in the future. The interactive session of questions and answers drew the meeting to a close for the day, with Assistant Bishop Martin and Abdul Rahman offering the closing prayers for the day.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Day II

Rev. Mrs. Angèle Dogbé, who is PROCMURA Women's and Education Programme Coordinator, reconvened the plenary for the day's activities starting the session off with prayers from both a Christian and Muslim. Rev. Dogbé then proceeded to divide the participants into 3 groups each with 5 questions to deliberate on. Each group was to choose a chairperson to moderate the discussions and a secretary to take notes and later report. Following the tea break, the plenary recongregated and the groups had the opportunity to present their findings to the plenary.

Group I

1. *What are the contentious issues between Christians and Muslims in Southern Sudan and what solutions do you have?*

- i.* Ignorance about the other; solution is to provide more material for learning.
- ii.* Intermarriages between Christians and Muslims present a source of conflict among the two communities; couples should be allowed to steer the direction of their marriage- Counselling before marriage is needed.
- iii.* Slaughtering of animals; why is it that only Muslims can do so? This has to be worked at carefully because it can breed conflict.
- iv.* Grabbing of land e.g. in Yei; there is a need for discussions pertaining to how grabbed land can be returned to original owners.

2. *What are the strong points/elements for Christian and Muslim relations in Southern Sudan?*

- i.* The existence of cordial relations between Christians and Muslims
- ii.* The abundance in social events where the entire community is one e.g. weddings etc.
- iii.* A shared history in Southern Sudan
- iv.* A common ambition for peace and development

3. *What are the anxieties among Christians and Muslims for the upcoming referendum?*

- i.* Muslims being relegated to minority status and fear of reprisals from Christian majority who suffered under Muslim rule in the north.
- ii.* Negative connotations associated with Islam and Muslims.
- iii.* Resurgence of inter-ethnic violence and riots.

4. *What is the way forward to building relations for peace and development?*

- i.* There should be a formation of a supreme religious council made up of Christians and Muslims to advice government and facilitate continuous dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

5. *Any other important issues for you to consider?*

- i.* There should be an autonomous Interreligious Council, devoid of government and outside interference.

After the presentation from Group I, the plenary ushered back members to their seats with a hearty clap. However, there was a clarification on the issue of grabbed land. Land leases on some properties have run out and have therefore been repossessed by the administrative units in charge of allocations.



These have subsequently been passed on to other individuals or organisations and this has created a false perception of land grabbing incidents. Individuals and organisations alike need to take cognisance of the lease issue and stop propagating potentially harmful information. Important to note is the fact that different regimes in Sudan have distributed land differently during their tenure, what needs to be done is a revisit to land allocations.

Group II

1. *What are the contentious issues between Christians and Muslims in Southern Sudan and what solutions do you have?*

- i. Polemical preaching; this should be avoided in its totality.
- ii. Intermarriages- there seem to be forced conversions when a couple gets married; there should be the freedom of choice of religion when marriages are contracted.

2. *What are the strong points/elements for Christian and Muslim relations in Southern Sudan?*

- i. Belief in a Supreme God.
- ii. The propagation of religion (Evangelism and *Da'wah*) without censorship.
- iii. Deeply rooted elements of peace espoused by both faiths.

3. *What are the anxieties among Christians and Muslims for the upcoming referendum?*

- i. Fear of persecution, Christians by Muslims in the North and Muslims by Christians in the South. Both governments should protect civilians by launching post referendum strategic plans for religious tolerance and inter-ethnic tolerance.

4. *What is the way forward according to you to building relations for peace and development?*

- i. Forgiving each other and moving forward.
- ii. Muslim brothers in the South to issue a statement condemning past atrocities done in the name of Islam.

5. *Any other important issues for you to consider?*

- i. There should be continuous dialogue between Christians and Muslims to enable peaceful coexistence to become the norm.

Group III

1. What are the contentious issues between Christians and Muslims in Southern Sudan and what solutions do you have?

- i.* There is a general feeling of resentment by Christians against Muslims.
- ii.* Muslims have been enjoying economic success as well as political favour when it comes to promotions, employment opportunities, business ventures etc.
- iii.* Intermarriage restrictions; Christians cannot marry Muslim women while Muslim men can marry Christian women.
- iv.* There is adoption of numerous cultural norms by some Southern Sudanese bearing a lot of influence from the North therefore it does not seem authentic and is generally viewed negatively.
- v.* Many Sudanese have learned Arabic, which is also the official language in schools however, Southern Sudanese have adopted English as their official language, what happens therefore to those who were taught only in Arabic? This needs to be looked at.
- vi.* One must openly declare his/her religion given that there are burial differences in Christianity and Islam.
- vii.* Negative connotations associated with Islam therefore unnecessarily endangering Muslims.
- viii.* Revenge by Christians on Muslims based on past atrocities.
- ix.* Land grabbing
- x.* Intimidation of Muslims by Christians.
- xi.* Suspicions between Christians and Muslims.



Some of the members of Group III confer before the presentation

Possible Solutions

- i.* Continuous dialogue between Christians and Muslims to iron out contentious issues.
- ii.* Fostering or religious tolerance, from an early age.
- iii.* Inclusion of the armed forces in the peace process; to reintegrate them back into society

What are the strong points/elements for Christian and Muslim relations in Southern Sudan?

- xii.* We are all Southerners regardless of religious affiliation

2. *What are the anxieties among Christians and Muslims for the upcoming referendum?*

- i.* Escalation of animosity between Christians and Muslims and inter-ethnic violence.

3. *What is the way forward to building relations for peace and development?*

- i.* Continuous Dialogue.
- ii.* Sharing of ideas and best practices with and among all stakeholders for peace.
- iii.* Embed fundamental freedoms and rights in the constitutional dispensation especially those of the freedom of worship.
- iv.* Engaging experts in peacebuilding and putting that knowledge into practice like what PROCMURA is doing with the conference.

4. *Any other important issues for you to consider?*

- i.* Reinvigoration of fellowship with one another and amongst adherents.
- ii.* Avoidance of polemical preaching.
- iii.* The Southern Sudanese history should be taught in schools to allow future generations to understand the real picture of the Sudan.
- iv.* There should be continuous workshops bringing Christians and Muslims together.
- v.* Information on peace building and mutual coexistence should be passed down to the grassroots.
- vi.* “From the Bullet to the Ballot” Southern Sudanese should embrace democratic principles.
- vii.* There should be a regrouping and analysis of progress made, strengths garnered and which can be expounded upon, an evaluation of weaknesses, exploration of opportunities and an assessment of threats.

The General Adviser took the podium after Group III wound up, and moderated over an open plenary discussion. He took time to clarify on certain matters arising from the group reports. The first issue was that of marriage. He explained that there were prescriptions to marriage that had been laid down by different religions and specifically as relates to Muslims and Christians.

For instance Muslim men are allowed to marry Christian women and up to four women provided that they can provide for all four of them. The men are not supposed to force any Christian women married to them to convert to Islam. Nonetheless, the children born out of the union must be Muslim. On the other hand, the Muslim women are not allowed to get married to Christian men.

Similarly Christianity has its own prescriptions to marriage, for instance it advocates for a one man one woman union which is evenly yoked. Consequently, the issue of leaving the matter to the couple, to do as they please, cannot arise. Instead PROCMURA advocates to faithful adherence to the teachings and a thorough understanding of each other's religion before engaging in intermarriages. One should be clear on the issues and make an informed decision based on the knowledge garnered.

On the matter of slaughtering of animals, the *Qur'an* has strict instructions on how and who can slaughter meat in order to have it as *Halal*, in those instructions the people of the *Kitab* (Christians and Jews) can slaughter animals and Muslims are allowed to eat the meat. In some cases some Muslims refused to eat meat slaughtered by Christians. This is not in order since the *Qur'an* permits them to eat. A similar incident did occur in Uganda but key to note is that such prejudices are based on a non-comprehension of the Holy Scriptures.

The discussions that ensued were based on finding a way forward to foster a more fruitful and continuous Christian and Muslim engagement for peace and development. Dr. Mbillah pointed out that there were matters that needed both Christian and Muslim perspectives, especially as it relates to government. He suggested that the formation of a body that represents the Christian and Muslim voice, ought to be a consultative body. Institutionalised bodies tend to be subject to manipulation, and in the long run drown out the voice of the council as an independent body.

Two principal points to be emphasised here are:

- 1.) Consensus building when reaching on decisions
- 2.) Genuine participation vested in upholding religious principles.

He gave a metaphor to suit the occasion saying "*The monkey says its eyes are deep and therefore it has to start crying early so that when its tears are seen you know it is in pain.*" Its meaning? Caution and therefore prevention is better than cure.



PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN

In winding up, he said that Southern Sudanese should approach the issues with decorum and with objectivity because hostility and war only fosters more hostility and conflict. The session was brought to a close with prayers from both the Christian and Muslim leaders.

After the lunch break the session was reconvened, the GA proceeded to give a final presentation on attitudes towards peace and reconciliation. He talked about the various animals that are associated with specific characteristics and which can be equated to human attitudes vis-a-vis their approach to conflict management and peace building. He talked about attitudes impinging on the fruition of peace and reconciliation efforts the stubborn mule, the bullish elephant, the sand head ostrich to name but a few.

All in all, the essence was to spur on the Southern Sudanese into real action towards peace building, reconciliation and development. He said that they have to accept reality as it is, make a conscious decision to actively take part in the peace process and above all bear with them the banner of God. Christians and Muslims cannot be hypocrites because the moral obligation and vocation placed on them, serving as an example to the entire community.

Dr. Mbillah noted that the fears that were born by Christians and Muslims in the Sudan were genuine but the other fear, for Sudanese as well as the entire world, is whether the results will plunge Sudan back to war? He advised the Christian and Muslim leaders not just to pray but also to work for that which they pray for. One way of doing this is to ensure that Christians get up and condemn violence against Muslims. Similarly, let Muslims advocate for Christian rights and not just for the rights of Muslims "*this is what we call pro-existence*", he concluded.



Draft Communiqué Reading



Church and Mosque Leaders embrace ICT during the reading of the Draft Communiqué

The session ended with a hearty clap of appreciation. As Dr. Mbillah took his seat the MC proceeded to appreciate him and invited the draft committee to read the first draft of the Communiqué. During the reading various opinions were raised and changes made to reflect the spirit and resolve of the conferees.

(For full Communiqué refer to Annex I)

Closing Ceremony

Mr. Tiberious Lecca the Chairman for the conference introduced the Director for Religious Affairs, Mr. Moses Telar Cindut and allowed him a few precious moments to address the plenary.

Mr. Moses Telar Cindut began by thanking PROCMURA for hosting such a fantastic conference, saying that dialogue and tolerance is a process. The government needs to be advised by organisations such as PROCMURA. It is now evident that religion cannot be politicised and instead the primary role of the government is to unite her people. This government effort to foster unity and build on relations can be achieved by a concerted effort from all stakeholders and experts in this field.

His brief comments were followed by a vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Tiberious Lecca who thanked PROCMURA for organising and facilitating a forum which provided a crucial opportunity for Christians and Muslims to deliberate over pertinent issues. He encouraged Christians and Muslims to continue with consultations and for PROCMURA to keep in constant engagement with Southern Sudan. He insisted that Christians and Muslims take the information and knowledge to the wider public and not just keep it to themselves. He said that the information was vital especially at the grassroots.

He thanked everyone for attending and officially declared the conference closed. Sheikh Juma Said Ali and Pastor Joshua Aggrey offered the closing prayers.

Recommendations

The recommendations were for the most part based on reflection from both Christian and Muslim participants at the conference. They were reflective of plenary discussions and private corridor consultations.

1. A conference on Christian-Muslim cooperation should be replicated in specific counties to nurture relationship building between the two religious groups.
2. A conference on intermarriages should be conducted to provide sufficient information on the issue given that a lack of awareness is harbouring resentment.
3. Southern Sudan Government and religious leaders workshop should be carried out to enable government to be sensitized in its dealing with the two groups especially if the South secedes.
4. Government should establish security teams to uphold the rule of law and to protect civilian populations.
5. A consultative Christian and Muslim body should be established to advice government on salient issues concerning Christians and Muslims.
6. A Christian and Muslim leaders forum should be organised to discuss the implications of forming a consultative body and craft out the guidelines by which it can be formed.
7. Land issues should be comprehensively addressed to avoid conflicts arising along these lines.

Conclusion

Reports reaching us have it that the President of the Republic of Sudan, His Excellency, Omar al-Bashir declared that he would not be in a position to accept a secession vote by Southern Sudan. Instead he favours the unity of Sudan. It perturbs, as it scares us, that with such a statement although noble in principle, it might be construed as violating the right of the Southern Sudanese to exercise their right to self determination. Following these remarks we are plunged back into the memories of bloodshed, loss of lives and the displacement of thousands if the statement is not viewed with a grain of salt. Indeed, all Sudanese are entitled to their opinion. However, we humbly put forth an appeal to the government of Sudan and its people to defend the principles and spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 otherwise known as the CPA.

The government and people of Sudan should respect the outcome of the referendum and accordingly the voice of the people. There should be in place mechanisms to ensure a free and fair referendum facilitated by the government, as should there be a security team deployed to maintain the peace and uphold the rule of law. Matters regarding the disputed borders can be worked on peaceably with all stakeholders being brought on board and consensus building to reach an amicable an agreeable solution used as a strategy.

PROCUMRA wishes to emphasise the fact that attaining peace, which is always a tedious process and much more difficult as compared to the ease in which conflict and violence can be bred, needs to be at the apex of the individual Sudanese mind. Let there be no episodes of violence or conflict following the referendum but rather let there be consensus building, dialogue, relationship building and compromise for the sake of the well being of the nation.

Annex I

THE SOUTHERN SUDAN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS COMMUNIQUÉ

(Juba Communiqué)

We, Christian and Muslim leaders drawn from member churches of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and the Southern Sudan Muslim Council (SSMC) from 20 to 22 September 2010, met at the Juba Grand Hotel, under the umbrella of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) and on the invitation of the Sudan Council of Churches.

Having deliberated on the theme ‘Christian and Muslim Relations for Peace and Development in Southern Sudan’ where crucial issues were identified and frankly discussed

Convinced By the fact that peace is a prime factor for development in Southern Sudan and realising that peace can only be achieved if both Christian and Muslim leaders are fully involved in the process

Aware that challenges and matters concerning the Southern Sudan can only be resolved by Southern Sudanese themselves

Conscious that we are one people with a common destiny and aspirations regardless of our religious and ethnic affiliations

Disturbed by the slow pace of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) as it relates to the referendum, that to date the registration and civic education of the voters is delayed with unconvincing explanations, which cause a lot of worry and anxiety among the Southern Sudanese

Wary of internal and external forces that may work to subvert the CPA and the principles it stands for

Pledge to uphold the principles of justice, peace and reconciliation for development in our land

Commit ourselves to educate Christian and Muslim communities and all peoples of Southern Sudan to embrace one another in unity and to desist from associating Islam with Arabism and Christianity as a Western import

Determined to ensure that religious freedom and all that it entails for people of religion and all others in Southern Sudan becomes the norm and not the exception

Resolve to work towards the establishment of a consultative body made up of Christian and Muslim leaders from the Sudan Council of Churches and the Southern Sudan Council of Muslims to facilitate and promote peace in our land.



Call on the government of the Sudan and its constituent political parties to institute pre-emptive measures that will help curtail religious persecution of any kind that may emanate as a result of the outcome of the upcoming referendum.

Call on the International Community and all who mean well for the people of Southern Sudan to be in solidarity with the people of Sudan at this crucial time of its history.

Express our deepest appreciation to PROCMURA and its leadership for keeping faith with us at this crucial time of our history, and urge them to continue to be in solidarity with us and provide us with the much needed guidance on Christian-Muslim constructive engagement for peace and development

Signed by:

By participants of the Christian and Muslim Religious leaders conference on Peace and Development in Southern Sudan

22nd September 2010

JUBA CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM YOUTH ON HIV/AIDS

Contents

Introduction	2
DAY I.....	3
Opening Ceremony	3
Stock Taking	4
Group Activities.....	4
Stages of Progression.....	7
Areas of Concentration	7
Main ways of Transmission.....	7
Symptoms	7
Risky Behaviour.....	8
Safe Practices	8
KEEPING SAFE.....	8
SAVE Method	9
Q&A.....	9
DAY II.....	10
Social Culture on HIV/AIDS	10
Cultural Practices Keeping HIV at Bay.....	11
How Can One Overcome the Negative Aspects of Cultural Practices?.....	11
Negative Behaviours Promoting HIV among Youth	12
SAVE Method vs. ABC Method	12
Social Capital	12
Role of the Church in addressing HIV/AIDS related issues	13
Acronym C.H.U.R.C.H.	13
Dreaded C's; Church and Condoms	14
Role of the Mosque in addressing HIV/AIDS related issues	15
Stigma and Discrimination	16
Counselling.....	16
Implication of being diagnosed with HIV	17
AIDS affects	17
Types of Counselling	17
Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT).....	17
Closing Ceremony	18

Introduction

Without a shadow of doubt HIV/AIDS is decimating populations across Sub-Saharan Africa faster than children are being born. Unfortunately the most vulnerable group remains the youth. Youth here being defined as falling within the 15-35 age group. This youthful group unfortunately constitutes the majority of the human resource that is so vital to nation building and the development of Africa.

Sudan is no different in this respect. The youth continue to be the most vulnerable group and saving a generation might actually be the key resource to peace and development. With this very idea PROCMURA set out to bring Christian and Muslim youth of Central, Eastern and Western Equatorial Region of Southern Sudan together to address the issue of HIV/AIDS from a collective point of view sharing in experience and tact from both a common stand point and a diverging religious view. The workshop was carried out between 23rd and 25th, September 2010, in Juba, Southern Sudan, bringing together 42 participants in all.

CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM YOUTH ON HIV/AIDS



Christian and Muslim Youth pose for a photo with the Women and Education Programme Coordinator, (second left standing) Rev. Mrs. Angèle Dogbé

DAY I

The Sudan Youth Conference held in Juba, Southern Sudan, was a true test for Christian-Muslim youth interaction. The fine line between staying alive and walking in accordance with one's faith only set to place the youth between a rock and a hard place. Now throw into that, the prospect of having to work with your neighbour, him/her who does not share your religious orientation because the pandemic that is HIV/AIDS does not discriminate.

The HIV/AIDS workshop for the youth was organised by PROCMURA in collaboration with the Sudan Council of Churches. In total there were about 50 youth in attendance from 10 Counties of Central, Eastern and Western Equatorial Region of Southern Sudan.

Opening Ceremony

This session was presided over by Rev. Mrs Angèle Dogbé, PROCMURA's Women and Education Programme Coordinator and Mr. Nelson King, HIV/AIDS Officer for the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC). Sheikh Juma Said, Deputy Director Da'wah Section in the Southern Sudan Muslim Council, and Gunda Stigen, of the SCC, also spoke during the occasion, emphasising on the importance of bringing the youth together to forge a new chapter in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Gunda reiterated on the fact that the forum was for the youth, they needed to talk about HIV/AIDS from their point of view.

The generational change demands that sexuality and relationships be defined based on existing realities.



Gunda Stigen during the opening

Stock Taking

Participants took the time to introduce themselves, sharing with the plenary where they hailed from, in terms of their counties. This laid basis for the youth to be grouped in counties i.e. Yei, Laniya, Morobo, Kajikeji, Juba, Torit, Ikotos, Magwi, Mundiri and Yambio. The group conglomeration was part of the stock taking event of the workshop that demanded that the youth both, Christian and Muslim, identify the different approaches and realities of HIV/AIDS in their respective areas and draw comparisons with the other youth on their engagement with the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The four questions to be answered were:

1. What have you done about the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS?
2. What have you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?
3. What haven't you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?
4. What are your usual ways of working with the community in relation to HIV/AIDS?



The youth in groups as they took stock

Group Activities

Group I (Eastern Equatorial)

1. What have you done about the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS?

- Abstinence; practising of chastity.
- Avoidance of contaminated blood.
- Avoiding sharing of sharp objects.

2. What have you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?

- Putting on plays to create awareness.
- Attending workshops on HIV/AIDS.
- Accepting advice on HIV/AIDS.

3. What haven't you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?

- **Awareness Creation**

- Lack of funds

- Lack of transport

- Lack of security

- Ignorance

- Poor Communication

4. What are your usual ways of working with the community in relation to HIV/AIDS?

- Presentation of songs and drama on HIV/AIDS.
- Reciting of poems on HIV/AIDS.
- Encouraging others to go for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT).
- Showing films and documentaries on HIV/AIDS victims.

Group II (Central Equatorial)

1. What have you done about the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS?

- Carried out HIV/AIDS awareness
- Encourage Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) before marriage.
- Sharing with friends and family on prevention methods.
- Holding discussions at the community level concerning the pandemic; two things in particular:
 - a.) HIV/AIDS is real
 - b.) HIV/AIDS has no cure.

2. What have you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?

- Encouraged HIV/AIDS testing among the youth
- Encouraging abstinence by faithful adherence to religious tenets (both Christian and Muslim)

3. What haven't you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?

- Failed to encourage married people to get tested.
- Propagation of stigma and discrimination, by avoiding those infected by the virus.
- Neglected victims of HIV/AIDS

4. What are your usual ways of working with the community in relation to HIV/AIDS?

- Face to face interactions at the community level.
- Mobilisation of community to support HIV/AIDS projects and victims.
- Holding discussions in mosques and churches.
- Use of media to create awareness.

Group III (Juba County)

1. What have you done about the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS?

- Developing interest on the subject matter to facilitate prevention methods.
- Infection prevention through awareness creation campaigns.
- Encourage visits to VCT

2. What have you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?

- Created awareness within the community.

3. What haven't you done well and why, as an individual or within a group?

- Added on to stigma and discrimination in one way or the other.
- Neglected to care for those infected by the pandemic within the community.



One of the youth explains a point during the presentations

4. What are your usual ways of working with the community in relation to HIV/AIDS?

- Participating actively in youth groups organised within churches and mosques that create awareness on the pandemic.

After the presentations Mr. Nelson King, the SCC HIV/AIDS Coordinator proceeded to give an introduction and brief on HIV/AIDS. He talked about the first diagnosis of HIV, which was done in the United States. He explained how it developed a negative perception given that it was diagnosed among homosexuals and haemophiliacs. He broke down the acronyms HIV [Human Immune-deficiency Virus] and AIDS [Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome] just to be clear on what the two were.



Mr. Nelson King, SCC HIV/AIDS Coordinator during his presentation

Clarifying that AIDS is the last stage of the HIV infection. He was quick to note that for the time being HIV/AIDS remains incurable, but more importantly is the fact that HIV/AIDS is manageable.

An individual with the HIV moves through different stages to AIDS. This progression is however dependent on several factors such as age and diet.

Stages of Progression

1. Window Period
2. Asymptomatic Period
3. Chronic Symptoms
4. Full blown AIDS

Areas of Concentration

1. Body Fluids

- **High concentration:** semen, blood, vaginal secretion and breast milk which are considered.
- **Low Concentration:** saliva, sweat, urine, tears.

2. Body Cells

- Glial cells or brain cells
- Large intestines
- White blood cells

Main ways of Transmission

- Sexual Intercourse; accounts for approximately 90% of the infection rate in Sudan.
- Transfusion of contaminated blood.
- Mother to Child Transmission (MTCT); 3 out of 10 children born to infected mothers get the virus, either in the womb, through breast milk or during delivery.

Symptoms

Major

- Weight loss, about 10% within one month.
- Constant diarrhoea for more than a month.
- Persistent fever, for more than a month.

Minor

- Tuberculosis (TB) found in 30-50% of infected persons
- Mouth and throat sores.
- Skin rashes.
- Dry and constant cough.
- Blisters/rashes on the mouth and/or on the genitals.
- Cancer of the skin.
- Nerve damage
- Loss of hair.
- Pale skin.
- High and persistent fever.
- Heavy night sweat.

How HIV is NOT spread

- Mosquito bites
- Insect bites
- Shaking hands
- Social contact e.g. while playing games
- Sharing food from same cup/plate.
- Sharing toilets/ bathrooms/ clothes.

Risky Behaviour

The risky behaviours underlined practices that may lead one to more easily getting infected with HIV.

- Having unprotected sexual intercourse
- Drug use and alcoholism.

Safe Practices

- Visiting a Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Centre.
- Avoiding drugs and excessive consumption of alcohol.
- Testing while pregnant.
- Accepting only screened blood for transfusion
- Avoid sharing sharp objects e.g. needles, razor blades etc.

KEEPING SAFE

Given the adverse effects of HIV/AIDS two concepts were introduced to the youth to enable them better protect themselves.

Method I

- A** – Abstinence
- B** – Being faithful
- C** – Use of Condoms

Method II

- S** – Safe Practices
- A** – Access to treatment
- V** – Voluntary Counselling and Testing
- E** – Empowerment

These methods were going to be discussed further in detail as the workshop went on. Mr. King then



*“What about condoms?”
asks one of the youth*

took questions from the podium; the youth mainly focused their questions on clarifications based on stereotypes and myths about HIV/AIDS. Some of the myths that came out during the deliberations was that HIV/AIDS came from monkeys, that perhaps HIV/AIDS was synthesized in a laboratory to name but a few. A pressing issue among the youth was the debate on the use of condoms. One of the youngsters pointed out that the government was inclining the youth more to the use of condoms but the religious institutions, in this case the churches and mosques were against this.

This was quite conflicting for the youth, who emphasized that they were already grappling with a lot of dilemmas as they were transitioning to adulthood.

Mr. King in addressing the question, pointed out how vital the question was but to furnish it with a response would be to pre-empt the rest of the workshop. In highlighting an answer he grazed at the Safe Practices, Access to treatment, Voluntary Counselling and Testing, and Empowerment (SAVE) method as being a compromise between the position by religious leaders and the government, which could be bandwagoned with the opinion of medical practitioners.

Gunda, on the other hand called on the youth to move away from the hearsay and speculations and focus more on how to treat the and live with the virus. What is the viral load amount that can cause an infection, how do we integrate HIV/AIDS into the system (community) etc.

SAVE Method

The presentation on SAVE was carried out by Mr. King. As defined above, he went on to further explain the implications of SAVE as compared to the Abstinence, Being faithful and using of Condoms (ABC) method.

SAVE recognises the value of treatment and nutrition to prevent HIV/AIDS through its safe practices advocacy platform. In addition the value of VCT is crucial in terms of knowing ones status and providing much needed psychological care. ABC method misses out on this very important message of testing given that there is an estimated 70-90% of HIV positive people, who do not know their status. The importance of testing is not just limited to one knowing their status but also enables one to seek treatment and live positively (with or without the virus). Furthermore, the Empowerment aspect of SAVE method allows for the community to get actively involved in the multi-faceted nature of HIV/AIDS. Awareness, economic and social empowerment enables the community breed the element of care for the infected and affected.

SAVE which is still a fairly new method addresses critical questions on stigma, denial, discrimination and inaction.

In comparison, the ABC method regards people living with HIV as having failed to take regard on the method.

Q&A

There was a short question and answer session where the youth engaged Mr. King on the realities of HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis the SAVE method of prevention and care for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). There is a grand generational gap on the approach to HIV/AIDS. The youth are currently more exposed and liberal in their thinking. They often get opportunities to go out clubbing, engage in casual sex, access the internet for information, and for those who lived abroad, interact with different cultures and practices. The generational gap is therefore one of the most crucial ways in which HIV/AIDS should be addressed, the youth thought.

Mr. King agreed with this view, but reiterated that the sophisticated blend between old methodology and new is what crafts out strategies that are lasting because they address the old realities of the pandemic as they take into consideration the emerging ones.

DAY II

Social Culture on HIV/AIDS by Nelson King

This presentation focused on the cultural practices that enhance the spread of HIV/AIDS among the Sudanese. The practices that were underlined as having an impact on the spread of HIV include:

- Wife Inheritance
- Tattooing
- Circumcision
- Removing of teeth
- Forced marriages
- Sharing of blades during funerals, where members shave their heads.
- Men are traditionally allowed to have numerous sexual partners.
- Widows are supposed to identify brothers of the deceased who they are going to remain sexually active with.
- In the case of male impotence, women are supposed to bear the man children by having intercourse with another man.
- Once a girl gets her first menstrual cycle, she is not supposed to refuse any sexual advances, until she gets a suitor or married.
- A new promiscuous culture creeping in among the youth.
- Ubiquitous cultural practice recognising a married woman as belonging to the entire family.
- Wedding ceremonies that allow the married girl to be escorted by a convoy of other tribal girls who wilfully engage in sexual encounters during the duration of the wedding festivities.

Cultural Practices Keeping HIV at Bay

“Youth are traditionally not allowed to have sexual intercourse before marriage; some are thoroughly beaten if they do.”

The presentation on cultural practices was meant to castigate atavistic traditions that promote HIV/AIDS prevalence among the populous. Some of these traditional practices without deluding their cultural significance appeared somewhat malevolent in that they seemed to oppress women or out rightly promote sexual ‘misbehaviour’ or risky practices. Sharing or sharp objects during rites of passage, moaning ceremony et cetera and women and young girls being treated as objects for sex, are all practices that promote HIV infections. The aim here was to call to attention the dangerous practices accepted in society by dint of providing a forum for the youth to themselves identify some of these harmful practices.

Mr. Nelson, in a plea to the youth pointed out that as a society, there was no running away from the question of HIV/AIDS, the truth lay in its being real. Our religious inclinations also lay claim to veracity. Truth hinged on the way we live our lives and the values to which we subscribe. Christianity propagates the tale of chastity and abstinence before marriage. It also condemns adultery. The same principles resonate among Muslims with the exception of marriage partners.



The youth join in song and dance during the presentations as part of a bonding exercise

However there have been misgivings related to HIV/AIDS from the religious spectrum, one of which is victims of the pandemic are considered as sinners.

Far from it, the societal clamour for reprieve from HIV/AIDS is rooted in finding a holistic approach to the pandemic. The youth then broke off into groups to discuss:

- How to overcome the negative aspects of cultural practices.

How Can One Overcome the Negative Aspects of Cultural Practices?

- Avoid practices such as wife inheritance.
- Attending VCT periodically.
- Using of different blades during circumcision and funeral ceremonies.
- Encourage safe sex and use of condoms.
- Educating elders on HIV/AIDS
- Disseminating information from workshops to communities.
- Youth engaging in awareness campaigns targeting outmoded practices.
- Supporting PLWHA
- Nurturing the youth to work on their relationships i.e. with members of the opposite sex.

Negative Behaviours Promoting HIV among Youth

- Excessive consumption of alcohol i.e. impairs judgement.
- Drug taking increases the chances of infection especially from sharing needles.
- Provoking dress codes.
- Numerous sexual partners by young people.
- Night clubs have become dens of prostitution and binge drinking and drug abuse.
- Many youth are getting into secret marriages which allow them to have multiple partners.
- Wrong use of condoms or the lack thereof.
- Mystery surrounding HIV/AIDS, thus a large percentage of youth lack in knowledge and awareness.
- Pornographic material is being widely circulated among youth and emboldening them to act out on their urges.
- Young men are now resorting to unsafe sex with the goal of impregnating the girl so as to avoid the bridal dowry.
- Many youth shy away from VCT, thus do not know their status making it easy for those infected to in turn infect others.
- Fear of stigmatization, keeps those who know their status from revealing it.

Based on the flurry of information availed during the sessions, it is apparent that cultural and contextual approaches to fighting HIV/AIDS have to be embraced. A transposition of strategy is not the way to go, what works in Uganda is not necessarily what will work in Southern Sudan. Sexual urges are universal, however the cultural connotations of HIV/AIDS are different region from region, culture to another. These existential realities beg examination and therefore tact, indeed an unexamined life is not worth living.

SAVE Method vs. ABC Method

The SAVE method was examined against the light of the ABCs to reveal the following:

1. It is more flexible with respect to the care element towards victims.
2. It encompasses an educative approach on care, knowing one's status and post-infection knowledge, empowerment etc.
3. It also helps curtail the spread of the virus through knowing about the virus
4. It also tackles the virus in a more comprehensive manner for instance the question of empowerment and access to information in the society is crucial.

Social Capital

The point on social capital was explained in terms of the collective responsibility to address the pandemic and the toll it had taken on individuals, families and communities. The lost manpower and one that was needed to effectively address it. Skills, time and monetary resources were needed to tackle the pandemic. Social capital refers to both human and economic capital working in synergy to mortalise this immortal enemy.

Role of the Church in addressing HIV/AIDS related issues

Rev. Edward Waiwai took to presenting this topic, his presentation was rooted in pushing to the fore the moral values and principles that form the corner stone of the Church' approach. The presentation followed a sclerotic sequence of an acronymatised CHURCH.

Acronym C.H.U.R.C.H.



Rev. Waiwa (gesturing) shows images of an HIV/AIDS patient before treatment

One needs to be in a position to handle HIV testing and counselling, handling here refer to taking cognisance of the reality of HIV and the necessity of one knowing his status. It is by knowing one's status that, as the church and the community effective action can be taken to deal with the pandemic. The Church now is instituting a policy that advocates for VCT before marriage.

Care and Support: 1 Thessalonians 5:15

The Christian faith emphasises a care for the sick based on sympathising and empathising their condition. Support denotes not only a physical manifestation but also a moral obligation.

Handle: Psalms 13:16

Unleash: Mathew 16:18

Unleash a volunteer force of compassion. This volunteer force is based on love of neighbour. A united front from the church that cannot be undermined, which is resolved to care for the sick through a collective effort.

Remove the Stigma: Romans 15:7

The essence of which is to accept one another for who we are just as Christ accepted all and sundry.

Champion Healthy Behaviour: Psalms 119:73

Championing healthy behaviour stems from the premise that we are God's creation our bodies mere vessels to serve the Lord. The inspiration to healthy living stems from within, based on an understanding and pursuit of God's commandments that teach us to care for our bodies, care for one another among others.

C – Care and Support

R – Remove Stigma

H – Handle VCT

C – Champion

U – Unleash a volunteer force

H – Healthy Living

Why the Church?

The church undertook this based on the following:

- Large number of adherents from around the world.
- Wide distribution of these adherents spread far over.
- It is easier to administer this values because of the shared religious conviction.
- Based on the numbers and geographical coverage, it is easier to proliferate the message through the different Church networks.
- The Church boasts a long standing history in terms of continuity, and the principles it spouses only reflect a long standing trend that has adapted to a contemporary situation.
- The church also boasts a strong moral authority which it can exercise with regards to serving humankind.
- There is a high motivational objective about serving God through humankind that brings forth fulfilment.

Why HIV/AIDS

- HIV/AIDS was unexpected and remains unpredictable. Unexpected in terms of its destructiveness and decapitating impact on society as a whole. Unpredictable because its effects are far reaching affecting society in ways that are still being deciphered. This based on its complex interrelatedness with other diseases which has far reaching implications on society.
- HIV/AIDS is manageable through medication and care, but remains incurable.
- HIV/AIDS inspires a prevention approach or strategy which the Church is only too willing to pursue.

The Church' official stance remains rooted in Abstinence and Faithfulness.

Dreaded C's; Church and Condoms

The condom is a tool, the circumstance and intention of its use is what differs.

Moderates and sympathetic within the Church advocate for the use of condoms during:

- Family planning.
 - Prevention from contracting HIV/AIDS.
- } *The Church only endorses use of condoms in these instances within marriages*

It should be noted these were the two instances that were deemed appropriate to discuss, given that for example the Catholic Church does not endorse the use of condoms, especially with regards to family planning.

Role of the Mosque in addressing HIV/AIDS related issues

The presentation was made by Amba Habib the Imam of Malakia.

In his opening remarks he pointed out the fact that an ongoing global war against HIV/AIDS needs a concerted effort. 65% of PLWHA are women. Majority of whom are found in Sub-Saharan Africa. The need for cooperation among all stake-holders is vital to tackle HIV/AIDS.

The Muslim community uses the *Jumaa* Prayer sessions on Friday's at the mosque to discuss matters social. HIV/AIDS has become one such issue that can no longer be shoved to the periphery, whether at home or in the mosque. The *Jumaa Khutba* (sermons), Muslims are sometimes urged to visit VCT Centres. Couples are now being encouraged to get tested before they get married, some mosques disclose the status of the couple during the wedding day to the couple.

M – Make good decisions in marriage

O – Overrule them all (decry stigma)

S – Support AIDS victims

Q – Qualify the methods that you are using

U – Unleash a Volunteer force

E – Empower the women to know their rights



*Amba Habib
emphasises a point
during the presentation*

The method and role that the Mosque is playing is rooted in care, prevention and empowerment. Given that the Mosque only endorses sexual encounter in marriage, the thrust here is abstinence and faithfulness in marriage. Given that the man is allowed to marry more than one wife, in the event he can provide for them. The Mosque is categorical in stating that this should not be an excuse for promiscuous living. Care is to be extended to those affected and infected, compassion a corner stone in this venture. The mosque in its approach pushes for quality in the methods employed to address the pandemic, quality here underlies the personnel and methods of approach to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Finally, women who form the bulk of those infected and affected have proven to be the most vulnerable group of them all. A deliberate effort to ensure that women are empowered in terms of knowledge and skills on the pandemic is currently underway.

Everyone needs to engage actively to fight this pandemic without any exceptions, prayer though is the corner stone of this fight.

Stigma and Discrimination

This part of the workshop was presented by Eva Minialla, Chairperson of PLWHA in Juba. Her recount was personal giving the youth the background of how she got infected, to how far she has managed to live with the virus.

She begun by explaining how her husband who frequently travelled died of the disease, which prompted her to get tested only to reveal she was also seropositive. She recounted her tumultuous ordeal at the hands of friends and family, who practically abandoned her. Things got worse after the death of her husband who had been the main bread winner leaving her with 5 children to raise on her own. In deed when things go wrong they go awry, she was let go from her job because of her frequent malady. Her frequent absenteeism only made for the perfect excuse to lay her off but in all reality, her status which was no secret, was the actual reason behind her getting fired.

Unfortunately, in 1999 when she got infected with the virus medication was not widely available and the government's blatant refusal to accept the reality of the situation made things worse. However after protests by PLWHA and several interest groups, the government caved in to the demands and officially accepted the reality of HIV/AIDS eventually stocking a couple of hospitals with ARVs.

At the time PLWHA found solace in one another, turning to each other to form support groups. Stigma is not just another word in the thesaurus to her; it's a living testimony of actual events that came to pass. She encouraged the youth to remain safe, to get as much information as they possibly could on the subject matter. She emphasised on the need for all the youth to get tested bearing in mind that sexual intercourse was not the only way one could get infected. Upon being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS she continued, one can always continue to live positively through healthy eating, and continuous intake of ARVs.

Counselling

Counselling was described as a process which deals with helping people make informed decisions, cope with a certain events or situations, and gives assistance to empower one to solve their problem.

Why Counselling?

- Therapeutic
- Restore hope
- Live positively
- Prepare for future
- Face reality
- Prepare for life after death.



*Mrs. Minialla poses with
Rev. Dogbé after her
presentation*

Implication of being diagnosed with HIV

- Trauma
- Nearness of death
- Early death certificate
- Self stigma and discrimination.

AIDS affects

- The public domain
- The private domain

Types of Counselling

Pre & Post Test Counselling

- Prevention Counselling
- Family Counselling
- Couple Counselling
- Crises Counselling
- Pastoral Counselling
- Pre and post marital Counselling

Follow up & Supportive Counselling

- Adherence Counselling
- Peer Counselling
- Bereaved Counselling
- Alcoholic Counselling
- Educational & Preventive Counselling
- Group Counselling

Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT)

This is also referred to as the entry point to care and prevention, for obvious reasons. The VCT facilitates one of the most important aspects of the fight against HIV/AIDS, behaviour change. For example once a mother knows her status prevention of mother to child transmission can be effected. VCT is therefore encouraged for all, not just for the sake of knowing one's status but also for the purpose of managing opportunistic infections.

VCT is designed in such a way that it not only enables one to know their status and thus facilitate a lifestyle choice, but it also enables an HIV/AIDS individual access support, accept ones status and more importantly for the uninfected it reduces stigma by creating awareness.



Points of clarification from participants



There are normally stages a HIV/AIDS individual finds him/herself upon discovery of their status as prescribed by counselling experts, these are:

- Shock
- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance
- Coping



Rev. Dogbé of PROCMURA hands over the HIV/AIDS materials to Mr. Nelson King of the S.C.C.

The stages are considered the general progression towards accepting one's positive status although some do suffer from chronic depression. The fight against HIV starts in the mind, its manifestation is in our actions.

Closing Ceremony

The workshop was drawn to a close by Rev. Waiwai who gave an opportunity to Rev. Mrs. Angèle Dogbé, Women's Coordinator and in charge of the HIV/AIDS programme at PROCMURA to offer some closing remarks. Rev. Dogbé thanked the youth and resource persons for participating, urging the youth to translate their knowledge into proactive community efforts to fight the pandemic. She then presented a series of books on HIV/AIDS, to the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) which were distributed to the youth. These books served as resources for the youth to creating awareness and keeping the good fight against HIV/AIDS.



Youth go through the material distributed by PROCMURA

Way Forward

The youth acknowledged having learnt quite a bit from the workshop, especially with regards to prevention techniques.

They also suggested the following as a means of fighting the pandemic.

- Bring the work

The workshop was closed by Mr. Tiberious Lecca who gave a vote of thanks and officially declared the conference over.