
AGLI - Report from Kenya - April 17, 2010
Friends Church Peace Team Rises Again

Dear All,

Those of you who have followed and remembered my reports from 2008 and early 2009 will remember the many postings about the Friends Church Peace Teams. In January 2008 this group was nominated by all Quakers in Kenya to become the body to respond to the post election violence. Their first activity was to give humanitarian support to internally displaced people missed by the Red Cross and the Kenyan Government. The group then moved on to do some really exciting, ground-breaking work with the internally displaced people in Turbo internally displaced persons' camp and the local communities in Turbo Division. This division is right across the road from where Gladys and I live in Lumakanda.

Almost half of the town of Turbo was burnt and destroyed during the violence and many of the other small towns were also badly damaged. The main road from Nairobi to Kampala and beyond, A-104, transverses this district. While the real boundary zigzags, the unofficial boundary between the Luhya and the Nandi is the road. Due to the heavy truck and vehicle traffic on the road, most of the small towns have very diverse populations, which is one reason so much violence occurred in Turbo Division.

In 2010 Friends Church Peace Teams (FCPT) has re-organized itself as it sees that the next election in August 2012 is little more than two years away. It is time to organize for this. Note that I am a member of the Friends Church Peace Teams' Executive Committee.

Already FCPT has launched a series of AVP workshops with the Peace Committees in the seven locations of Turbo Division. These Peace Committees are appointed by the District Officer (DO) and to put it judiciously, FCPT was not overly enthusiastic about these Peace Committees during their work there in 2008 and early 2009. The idea is to bring these Peace Committee members together with some other members of their community to learn the basics of non-violent conflict resolution. Three of these workshops have been held and one more is planned for next week.

One major issue is that Peace Committee members are accustomed to being given a sitting allowance for attending workshops. While \$1.50 per day is a normal basic wage, other NGO's have given them \$5, and even more than \$10, per day for coming to a workshop. We don't give sitting allowances. Nonetheless out of the 24 people who

came for the day one of the first AVP workshop, 23 returned the next day even though they realized they would receive no sitting allowance.

The plan is to do advanced AVP workshops in May with the people who have completed the basic training. Next, 20 to 25 people who have completed the advanced AVP will be chosen to participate in a Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) workshop in June.

The second prong of the work is to start a Turbo Inter-religious Peace Task Force. Joseph Mamai, the Chairman of FCPT, wrote a letter of invitation to all the churches and mosques that we could find in Turbo Division. The meeting was scheduled to start at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 15. At 10:30 a.m. I told Gladys that we might expect 30 people. I was wrong. Almost 80 people from 22 denominations attended and the room was over crowded. About 25 members of FCPT, who have done the peace work voluntarily in the past, showed up. Also, about 5 or more members of the local Turbo Friends Church - including the pastor - attended. Representatives from most of the mainstream Protestant denominations were present and one from the Catholic Church. There were also smaller churches, such as the Full Gospel Church, which I know nothing about. We were pleased to see that five members of the Turbo mosque also attended. The meeting opened with a Christian prayer and ended with a Moslem prayer and, really, except for the last words - the religious formula - the prayers were similar. All people, regardless of religion, really pray for the same things!

Some of the pastors and others did not know sufficient English so the meeting was conducted in Swahili. It was a difficult meeting for Joseph Mamai to clerk because people would stray off the topic of initiating an inter-religious task force to commenting on the current political situation. One man verbally attacked the Moslems who were right there in the room. Mamai let people speak, with a maximum time limit of five minutes, and then reminded everyone that the task was we were supposed to be addressing. In the end everyone agreed to the formation of the Turbo Inter-religious Peace Task Force and each denomination appointed one person to an organization committee.

I think that this positive response indicates that people really want to promote peace and tranquility in their communities. The problem is that there is no organization that teaches and empowers people to act. As a result when the violence comes people are too shocked and unprepared to react. The violence, on the other hand, seems to have been well organized in Turbo Division. Building a Culture of Peace is essential.

Near the beginning of the meeting, Mamai asked each church/mosque to relate what they did during the post election violence. Many had done something, but in every case whatever was done was within their own church. In this respect the Quakers were unique because they were doing peace work outside of the Quaker Church.

The third leg of the FCPT peace work in Turbo Division, which is still in the planning stages, will be to form the youth of each location into Youth Peace Groups. The actual name has not been agreed upon. The idea is to do five AVP workshops with youth

reaching 100 to 125 young people. Then FCPT will do two advanced AVP workshops for 40 of these youth, followed by an AVP training for facilitators for 15 of those youth. This will be done in 7 locations. These 15 facilitators will become the leaders of a Youth Peace Committee. They can begin their work by offering five apprentice AVP workshops for more youth in their location. It will take about a year to accomplish this. The following year FCPT can work on an election violence prevention program in time for the August 2012 elections.

If Friends Church Peace Teams is successful in their peace building activities, a division, hard hit by the 2008 post election violence, will—rather than having an escalation in the cycle of violence—have a much more peaceful result. This involves a lot of planning, execution, and hard work.

To organize this needed work, FCPT has hired Getry Agizah as their new fulltime coordinator.

Peace,
Dave

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New webpage: www.aglifpt.org
New email: dave@aglifpt.org

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