CLUB SERVICE PROJECTS

EARLY CONFLICT WARNING AND EARLY RESPONSE FOR CO-EXISTENCE:
TRF GLOBAL GRANT # 25754: USD 50,500

INTRODUCTION

This project was sponsored by the Uganda Joint Christian Council in conjunction with Rotarians for the purpose of building capacity for mediation and peaceful conflict resolution in 20 hot spot districts as the Republic of Uganda was preparing for the 2011 district councils and national parliamentary elections.

The Joint Christian Council (UJCC) is a Non – Governmental Organization (NGO) which brings together three Christian faith religious institutions namely; the Catholic Church, the Church of Uganda, and the Orthodox Church in Uganda for the purpose of sharing matters of faith, promoting social and economic development and promoting peace, justice and reconciliation in the country.

As the 2011 general elections approached a need assessment study carried out by UJCC strongly indicated that the election process would, going by past experience, be afflicted by conflict and violence in certain hot spots of the country and that community mediation would be the most useful and desirable tool for prevention or reducing the anticipated electoral malpractices leading to conflict and violence in the fragile and fractured socio-political environment.

THE PROJECT

Therefore UJCC prepared a financial and technical proposal for procuring funds for conducting a capacity building project for training and facilitating civic education and conflict early warning monitors. The proposal was presented to the Rotary Club of Annapolis Washington DC and during the Rotary International Convention held in New Orleans Luisiana USA in May 2011 the RC of Annapolis linked up with RC Kololo Kampala to put together a Rotary Global Grant application which was eventually approved by The Rotary Foundation towards the end of 2011 as Global Grant Project #25754

The original proposal prepared by UJCC and which was targeting the 2011 general elections was supposed to cover 20 districts including Rukingiri, Mbarara, Bushenyi, Kasese, Kibaale, Adjumani, Amuru, Gulu, Dokolo, Abim, Soroti Minicipality, Bukedea, Sironko, Mbale Municipality, Tororo Municipality, Nebbi, Iganga, Mukono, Masaka, and Sembabule

However by the time the Rotary Club of Annapolis was able to identify and link up with RC Kololo as the Host Rotary Club Partner during the RI Convention in May 2011 the elections had already taken place in January. Consequently the project was scaled down to only 4 post - election violence districts of Nebbi, Lira, Tororo and Busia and subsequently the funding was reduced from USD 100,000 to USD 500,500. The money was contributed to as follows: TRF - $21,500; RC of Annapolis, Washington – USA -$10,350; RC of Greater Severna USA - $750; RC of Dupont Circle USA - $500; RC of Monroe USA - $400; District 7620 - $8000; RC of Kololo-Kampala - $3000; and District 9200 - $6000.
PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives/activities of the project were to:

1. Conduct training sessions (10 days in total) for 24 mediators (selection based on highly respected individuals from civil society, religious and traditional leaders/organizations, local Rotary Clubs, women and youth) in 4 new post-election hot spot districts of Nebbi, Lira, Tororo and Busia.

2. To conduct field supervision with project trainers and provide mentoring of district mediators (twice in six months after the training) lasting 6 field days for the 4 districts and to collect data at least twice a month via mediators through their existing forums such as village meeting centres, women and youth groups, cultural and traditional functions.

3. To conduct dialogue meetings with the 4 district security committees (required by the national law), to review continuous civic education in communities and engage in conflicts being handled, early conflict warning indicators and responses expected from the district security committees.

4. To conduct an annual review in the 9th month of the project with all trained mediators, district security committee UJCC and host Rotary project implementation team as well as the Country Rotary peace Committee to share experiences, challenges and consolidate their network.

5. To conduct media awareness campaign through radio talk shows to provide civic education (especially, to inform public about political systems and participation, civic rights and responsibilities, but also report actual mediation trainings)

6. And to train 4 interact leaders (patrons) from 2 schools (1 per region). These would be trained as facilitators in peace building, group formation, preserving culture, supervision of debates and promotion of income generation activities.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

In summary the project achievements can be listed as follows:

- A lot of enthusiasm was generated by the project;
- District leaders from the 4 districts welcomed the project and recommended that it should be replicated in the remaining 16 districts originally identified by UJCC.
- The community leaders, politicians and religious leaders are praising the intervention which effectively reduced the anticipated conflict and violence.
- In terms of public relations the project helped people to realise that Rotary does not only engage in provision of water, sanitation, health etc but it also contributes to peace and conflict resolution.
- The participation of local Rotary Clubs like the Rotary Clubs of Arua and Lira and particularly the participation of local Rotarians was very highly beneficial and appreciated by all concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the country prepares for the 2016 national elections it is recommended that the project which was reduced from 20 districts to cover only Nebbi, Lira, Tororo and Busia, should, as soon as possible, be revived and expanded to cover the other 16 districts and that future projects in this category should prominently include more income generating activities so as to empower people to resist being manipulated and enticed, with bribery like small sums of money and packets of essential commodities like sugar and salt to part with their voting
cards to candidates agents during elections. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education should consider including peace building subjects in the school curriculum.

This project provides R.C Kololo and its International Rotary Partner Clubs an opportunity to expand it into a major Global Grant of at least US$ 300,000 or more if it is expanded by UJCC and the Clubs to cover not just 20 districts but the entire country.

GENESIS OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF RELIGIONS IN POLITICAL ELECTION POLLS MALPRACTICES IN UGANDA

For the reader who would like to gain more insight into the causes of conflict and violence experienced during political election polls in Uganda the following short thesis might be of help in shedding some more light and enlightenment. In Uganda as indeed in many other African countries like Kenya periodic elections, organized to change or retain political power both at local or national legislative council levels, have often been accompanied by either premeditated or spontaneous conflict or violence. The desire to win elections at any cost including violence and the practice by the election loser to violently dispute poll results has been more or less institutionalized in Uganda politics to the extent that every time there is an election in any part of the country conflict and violence before, during and after the election polls are always to be anticipated.

This political violence which in some cases has been state-inspired has gone through several historical stages of metamorphosis. The conflicts have been either factionally religio-sociologically influenced or ethnically/ideologically oriented or purely based on personal greed for power. For instance during the elections leading to the attainment of Uganda independence the violence, wherever it happened, was basically based on political party ideological principals although the factional religion factor and ethnic biases were always very much in the background. Thus election violence was considerably reduced and tamed by the fact that constituency party candidates were nominated by the party central committees instead of being decided upon through preliminary party elections. If your party did not nominate you there was no cause and basis for you to call upon your supporters to raise up in arms and cause violence.

In recent times however, and with the introduction of party primary election to decide on party candidate, ideological party principles and the desire of political candidates to win elections in order to offer service to their people appear to have been superseded by personal greed for power and wealth. Politics has become the most lucrative form of government employment. Thus the ideology of winning the elections whatever it takes has become deeply engrained in the Ugandan political fabric. It is “either I win or he/she loses.”

The craze for power has led to different power hungry groups resorting to use of the power of the gun instead of the power of popular vote at polls. Consequently the country has had to witness and survive periodic political and ethnic-generated violence and crises since it gained its independence in 1962. The first gun violence incident experienced in independent Ugandans was recorded in 1964 in Nakulabye, a suburb in south-western Kampala Municipality (at that time), when a drunken soldier from the Northern region of Uganda entered a beer bar in Nakulabye in search of the services of a woman prostitute. When he approached a woman and she rejected his amorous offer he misinterpreted this as an ethnic-biased insult from the snobbish Southern Baganda women who deserved to be punished for their arrogance.
He left the bar but later returned accompanied by a few friends fully dressed in their army uniforms and in a feat of rage, sprayed bullets in the bar killing several bar patrons. This unprecedented violent gun action by soldiers in uniform shocked the entire Ugandan society to the core for it had never happened before. From the time Uganda became a British Protectorate at the beginning of the 20th Century Ugandans had never witnessed off-duty soldiers leaving their army barracks and terrorizing civilians in town. They had only seen and admired uniformed security forces including army soldiers at march-past parades during important occasions such as yearly Independence Day celebrations.

From the day of the Nakulabye incident onwards uniformed soldiers became a common site on Kampala streets and at road blocks especially after the Obote 1 regime a contingent of the Uganda Army led by Colonel Amin, stormed the Lubiri (Kabaka's Palace) in June 1966 and ousted Kabaka Muteesa II from power forcing him to flee into exile in London and a state of emergency was declared in Kampala. It is not necessary to go into the details of the subsequent almost continuous state of violence and insecurities that Uganda has staggered through up to now.

Suffice to mention that some of the state-inspired brief as well as prolonged periods of violence and insecurity included the military coup of January 1971 by Idi Amin Dada during which almost all the military commanding officers of the Uganda Army who were mostly from the Acholi and Langi tribes were systematically and mercilessly butchered in a matter of few hours and his subsequent liquidation of those whom he saw as threats to his power during his nine (9) years of bloody rule; the 1979 liberation war spearheaded by the Tanzanian People’s Defence Forces (TPDF) which fought Amin out of power; the short lived but violent rule of Yusuf Lulu in 1979-80; the very violent 1980 general elections that returned Milton Obote and his Uganda People’s Congress Party (UPC) back to power; the 1971-1976 bush liberation war that brought Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement to power and which saw the so called Luwero Triangle in Buganda become a depopulated desolate wilderness; the TPDF (Tanzanian Peoples Defence Forces) destruction of Arua Town and many areas of West Nile as they pursued Amin's soldiers across the border into Sudan; the second military coup against Obote government led by Tito Okello Lutwa and Basilio Okelo; the meaningless but destructive insurgency led by Alice Lakwena in the North and Eastern Uganda; and the infamous insurgency led by Joseph Kony which witnessed acts of inhuman atrocities inflicted on the people of Northern and parts of Eastern Uganda.

This article will restrict itself to conflict and violence during political elections in modern independent Uganda which can be traced back to the period between the beginning of 1960 and the granting of independence in 1962 and which was a crucial period in Uganda.

To quote the late Prof. Samwiri R. Karugire in his book A Political History of Uganda (page171): " In June of 1960, by way of implementing the Wild Report, the Colonial Secretary announced that there would be direct elections throughout Uganda to the Lecgo (Legislative Council or what is known as Parliament today) in 1961 and that these would be the elections which would preclude the granting of self-government to the Protectorate. This announcement was a prelude to pandemonium in the political life of the Protectorate. As expected Buganda vehemently opposed the holding of the proposed elections and a delegation, led by the Kabaka himself, went off to London to persuade the Colonial Secretary to postpone the elections until federal status was granted to Buganda in a self-governing Uganda. This in turn raised a storm of protest in the rest of the country."
Even today 50 years after independence, some sections of the Buganda are still agitating for a federal (Federo) status of Buganda.

That the Baganda wanted federal status within independent Uganda because they considered themselves more advanced and superior to the rest of the tribes in Uganda was only partially true. A more pertinent reason was that the Kabaka and his conservative courtiers could not entertain the idea of Buganda and especially the Kabaka being ruled by a commoner, moreover a Catholic, in independent Uganda since Mr. Benedicto Kiwanuka of the Democratic Party appeared to be headed for winning the elections if they were free and fair.

Factionalism based on religion was not limited to Buganda alone. On the contrary it was widespread throughout the country especially after the 1955 District Administration (District Councils) Ordinance which abolished the nomination of District Legislation Councils Members and provided for universal suffrage election of such council members. Even before political parties formally came into play such elections were dominated by considerations of religion factional affiliations. In his book: *Roots of Instability in Uganda*, (p.45) Prof. Karugire informs us that “It is not to be supposed that political strife was confined to Buganda alone because in the period running up to independence, nearly all district councils became ungovernable owing to factionalism based on religion. As it became evident that Britain was determined to leave, each faction jostled for advantage and most of the district councils ceased to function and some of these could only meet in the presence of armed police.”

When the rest of Uganda went to the polls in March 1961 to elect members of Parliament (Buganda boycotted the polls) religion was more at play than the actual ideology of political parties. Catholics voted for the Democratic Party (DP) while Protestant and most Moslems voted for the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC). Apart from Buganda, this first national election which was won by DP was fairly peaceful in most areas of the country. However, although Benedicto Kiwanuka went on to become Uganda's first Prime Minister or Chief Minister as he was called, a second election had to be called after the British Government sided with UPC and Kabaka Yekka ( a party formed in Buganda to nominate Buganda's Representative Members to National Parliament ) who argued that the March 1961 elections were not representative of the whole country since they had been boycotted by the majority of the voters in Buganda even though the Democratic Party had participated and won almost all the seats in Buganda despite a lot of intimidation.

While it is true that in March 1961 elections DP won 19 out of the 21 seats allocated to Buganda it is also true that this was achieved from a very small fraction of the population of Buganda. To shade more light on this issue, here again are some quotations from Prof. Karugire’s book *Roots of Instability in Uganda* (p45&46):

“The Kabaka’s mission to London was a failure because the Colonial Secretary refused to postpone the elections and, when the delegation returned from London, the Kabaka’s government decided to boycott the elections altogether. For this purpose, the well – honed machinery of the Kabaka’s government was let loose on the population to intimidate or harass those who might be misguided enough to seek to register and vote. The point has been made and it needs to be repeated, that the normal police duties in rural Uganda were carried out by the chiefs and the people, and not the Ugandan police which was only to be found in large urban centres. Now, with the fearsome machinery of the Kabaka’s government geared to law – breaking, the protectorate government was quite simply helpless; even the stringent
laws that were passed by the Legislative Council to protect Baganda voters against the violence of the other Baganda bent on preventing voting in Buganda could not be enforced. There was no way of protecting all the villages of Buganda, especially at night.”

“Even if all the police force of the protectorate had been put on patrol duty in Buganda alone, this could not have prevented crop slashing, house burning, livestock maiming, and various acts of arson which were normally perpetuated at night against those adjudged to be “disloyal” to the Kabaka—i.e. Sympathisers of national parties who dared to register to vote. Against these fearsome odds the majority of Buganda’s electorate judged it prudent to keep away clear of registration centres and polling stations and who could blame them?”

“In the event, only a small percentage of Baganda braved these heavy odds to register and then vote (an estimated 3 - 4 % of those who were entitled to vote). In the circumstance, it was only the Democratic Party which could field candidates in all constituencies in Buganda, and it won most of the seats there. Whilst the UPC, an anti Buganda Organization as we have seen, fielded a few candidates and won only one seat, with the 19 seats won in Buganda and 24 in the rest of Uganda, the Democratic Party was able to muster a majority and Kiwanuka’s internal self – government was granted.”

“The fact of Kiwanuka becoming a Prime Minister of Uganda was a stunning shock to Kabaka’s government and the entire Protestant establishment in Uganda. The Kabaka’s government was the most enduring and visible part of the Protestant hegemony in Uganda but so was the UPC. The prospect of relinquishing power to a Catholic dominated party was an intolerable one both to the UPC and to the Kabaka’s government. Then, two realities of Ugandan politics stared the Protestant leaders in the face; the first was that the succession of Buganda was no longer practical politics; it never really had been beyond the rhetoric in which it was expressed. The second was that there was no way the UPC could get into power without securing some substantial support in Buganda, and this was the most daunting prospect of all, owing to the factors that we have outlined. And it must also be recorded; Britain did not relish the prospect of handing over the control of Uganda to a Catholic establishment either. It was these considerations which made Britain decide that there should be another general election before the granting of full independence on the seemingly reasonable grounds that Buganda had not meaningfully participated in the elections of 1961.”

And when the general elections were repeated in March 1962, the religion inspired violence spread to almost every corner of Uganda. In some constituencies DP voters and their candidates who were mostly Catholic were disenfranchised or prevented from reaching polling stations. In constituencies where DP candidates were sure to win ballot boxes were switched with those of UPC’s or acid was poured into DP boxes and destroyed the vote papers. But why did religion factionalism become such an important factor in political elections?

From the foregoing it can be safely concluded that political polls malpractices including violent intimidation of voters primarily based on religion factionalism during the March 1961 national elections marked the beginning of political violence that the country experiences during contemporary political elections in Uganda

Prof. Samwiri Karugire has argued that insecurity resulting from violent conflict in Uganda has its roots in sectarian inter - religion wars which were fought between 1888 and 1892 in Buganda. It is therefore not a mere coincidence that it is the Uganda Joint Christian Council
which has decided to formulate and promote the early conflict warning and early response for co-existence project ahead of general election in the country.

The Buganda inter-religion wars of 1888 - 92 were themselves proceeded by and generated from Kabaka Mwanga’s massacre of first the Moslems and then the Christian converts in 1886 in what is now commemorated as Uganda Martyrs Day at Namugongo on 3rd June every year. Most influential Ugandan historians argue that Kabaka Mwanga did not kill the Ugandan martyrs simply because of his dislike of Islam and Christianity as such but more likely because he felt that his political position was being undermined and threatened and that the influence of foreigners in his kingdom’s affairs had gone far enough and the tide must be stemmed.

As a result of the Namugongo executions and because Kabaka Mwanga was planning to round up the missionaries and prominent Christian converts known as abasomi or “readers” and maroon them in lake Victoria the three religious factions took pre-emptive action by combining their fighter forces and deposing Mwanga on 10th September 1888 in a bloodless coup and replacing him with Prince Mutebi Kiwewa who himself was deposed and replaced by Prince Kalema after he refused to be circumcised.

But the alliance between the three religious sects hardly lasted more than a month as on 12th October the Muslims who were more numerous than Christian converts and were backed by Arab traders who had for long established themselves in Buganda, fought and defeated the Christians who run away into exile and were settled by the Omugabe (king) of Nkore (Ankole) in Kabula.

Eventually the Kabula based Christian refugees joined forces with the deposed Kabaka Mwanga, who had taken refuge at Bulingugwe on the shores of Lake Victoria, and attacked and defeated the Moslems who run away and settled in the counties of Gomba, Busujju and Butambala. The Christians reinstated Mwanga as Kabaka of Buganda on 4th October 1889 with Apollo Kagwa as his Katikkiro (Prime Minister) after the previous first Christian Katikkiro and overall Christian army leader, Henry Nyonyintono, was killed in the war just before the Christians and Mwanga’s forces recaptured Mengo. Many Ugandans have always been misled to believe that Mr. Joseph Ssemwogerere Mulwanyamuli was the first Catholic Katikkiro during the one month period between the first deposition of Kabaka Mwanga and the defeat of Christians by Moslems.

During their exile period in Kabula the Protestant and Catholic Christian fighters were united. However, by the time they managed to defeat and chase away the Muslims from Mengo differences between the two groups had already started to emerge.

It did not take long before these differences which started on a low key as verbal conflict degenerated into a full –blown war in January 1892. In this brief inter Christian party war Captain Lugard sided with the Protestants while Kabaka Mwanga sided with the Catholics and although the Catholics were more numerous than the Protestant fighters they were quickly defeated by the Protestants when Capt. Lugard, using his maxim gun stationed at Mengo which he used to destroy the Catholic Cathedral at Rubaga, made all the difference. Like the “Saba Saba” machine gun used by Tanzanian soldiers which frightened and made President Idi Amin run away from the battle front during the 1979 Ugandan war, the mere strange sound booming of Captain Lugard’s maxim machine gun sent the Catholic fighters scampering and fleeing for safety in Buddu County popularly called Masaka.
The decisive defeat of Catholics by Protestants in Buganda coupled with the formal British annexation of what was later to be called Uganda marked the beginning of marginalization and exclusion of Catholics as well as the vanquished Moslems from political power not only in Buganda but also the rest of Uganda both during the colonial period and the early years of post-colonial independence Uganda until the ascendance to power of the National Resistance Movement in 1996.

From the time Britain started ruling Uganda Protectorate after signing the Buganda Agreement in 1900 the time and incorporated the kingdoms of Toro Bunyoro, Ankole and Chiefdoms of Busoga plus other segmentary societies to form Uganda there was relative peace and tranquillity in the protectorate. The British ruled the country using an indirect rule system through a hierarchal tiered system of chief appointed by the kings and approved by British Provincial Commissioners and District Commissioners. Invariably around all such chiefs were Protestants. For example in Nkore kingdom only.......two out of ten (10) Saza(county) Chiefs were Catholics the rest being protestants of Bahima ethnic group. Kingdom from 1901 the Ankole Agreement was signed up to 1944

This marginalization of Catholics in national and local government political power sharing was meekly accepted by the Catholics because they had no alternative. Protest by Catholic religious leaders such as the Right Rev. Bishop Bierman’s of St. Peters Nsambya (17th January 1913) were simply ignored. The Catholic leaders decided to concentrate on educating their followers to become teachers, doctors, engineers and other professions which did not require Local government or Central Government patronage. Moslems concentrated on trading.

But as independence drew near in the later period of the 1950’s the Catholic elite began to agitate for their rights and the religion based sectarian rivalry which had been subdued by the British colonial powers began to re-emerge in full force. However, the religious sectarianism was couched under the disguise of political parties. In the case of Buganda the religion and tribal sectarianism were concealed under the demand for special federal status (Federo). Unfortunately the religion factor still persists in Uganda politics up to today and therefore the UJCC effort to deal with the problem is to be highly commended and supported.