

WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

LOCATION	Loudo villages, Bur Payam, Torit County
IMPLEMENTER	Solidarity Association and Rehabilitation and Recovery Affairs (SARRA)
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Many communities depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. A shortage of water for production can lead to conflicts, as is the case for four villages in Loudo Boma where especially the communities from Bari and Omorwo have had conflicts over sharing water resources. Solidarity Association and Rehabilitation and Recovery Affairs (SARRA) brought these communities together and drilled boreholes to increase the access to water.

Water as source of conflict

The villages Bari and Omorwo in Loudo Boma, Torit County, have been in conflict for many years. Their people rely on agriculture for their survival. The root causes of conflict are limited access to water and rivalry over farmland. The villages also have limited access to health facilities and proper schools for their children.

In spite of a 2015 reconciliation agreement that was signed during a peace dialogue initiated by the former State Governor

of Imotong State, Mr Nartisio Loluke, the most recent conflict between Bari and Omorwo broke out in April 2016. Over 50 people were killed, the majority of them women and children. Relationships between the two communities broke down and movement was restricted because of frequent ambushes on the road between both villages. Out of fear of being killed, some of the community members migrated to neighboring villages, Torit town or to refugee camps in neighboring countries like Uganda and Kenya. Another consequence of the conflict was that farmers no longer cultivated their lands, leading to food insecurity. Humanitarian aid hardly arrived because of poor communication with and access for humanitarian agencies. The communities experienced hunger and starvation.

Drilling boreholes to improve access to water

With the aim to advocate for peace, SARRA organized a community meeting in Loudo Boma. The Torit County Commissioner chaired the meeting and village chiefs highlighted the impact of conflict on the communities. Following the meeting, a community needs assessment was conducted in Torit County. This led to an agreement on several actions that could help bring peace: relocation of the Loudo Boma villages to their ancestral areas, construction of schools and health units so that the children have access to proper education and health care, and drill boreholes to enhance the availability of water.



On site training of the water management committee in Luodo.



Local leaders of Loudo take over the constructed borehole from SARRA (Mr. Lodovico Oryem Albert; in the front).

SARRA drilled three boreholes in Loudo Boma to the benefit of all four villages. Initially Bari and Omorwo villages disagreed over the location to drill the boreholes, but through facilitated dialogue it was jointly decided to drill the borehole in Omorwo. Also four Water Users Committees were set up, each comprising of 5 people from each village (20 people in total, both male and female). A group with pump mechanics was also created, with 2 participants from each village. During the meetings held to set up the committees, messages of peace and harmony were shared.

Water is life but also peace

The boreholes are a good example of how communities can take responsibility for the joint management of shared resources that previously generated conflict. By participating in the Water Management Committees, conflicting communities now dialogue on issues affecting them and seek solutions to end the conflict. In particular the members from Bari and Omorwo villages now advocate for peace and call upon the entire community to embrace reconciliation, forget the past and focus on improving their relationship and developing their communities. The Commissioner of Torit County expressed appreciation for the borehole intervention as a strategy that has helped to bring peace in the two conflicting communities.

Way forward

To strengthen local water management and its potential for peacebuilding, there is a need for continuous peace monitoring and support the Water Management Committees with good governance skills. Also, the Water and Sanitation department at the County level ought to include the boreholes into existing government maintenance programs. Furthermore, the local government should motivate communities to relocate to their ancestral places and lobby development actors to apply a similar peacebuilding lens to the implementation of construction projects (schools, health centers).