Columns
Ministry



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by Mary Lilly Driciru

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Today, more than ever, peace is a necessity. Peace is a global trending topic, and many social justice advocates dwell on it. I'm fascinated by this theme because I have seen how justice is denied to some people in local communities, as well as within the global family. I appreciate people and organizations who advocate for justice and peace, such as the Gulu Episcopal Provincial Annual Prayer Peace Week and World Day of Peace in the Catholic Church.

Recently, I was among 15 sisters from Northern Uganda trained in active nonviolence and peacebuilding through an initiative of the Pax Christi International movement supported by the Hilton Foundation, in partnership with the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU).

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As trainees, we are passionate about sharing the values of sustainable peace in their local communities. The program, which kicked off in July 2024, came at the perfect time. For decades, Northern Uganda has been ravaged by civil wars, internal conflicts, trafficking in persons, land grabbing and other social evils hampering sustainable development.

Our first task in this long-awaited peacebuilding process was to identify people's needs. In doing so, the sisters worked with interdenominational groups, educational institutions, small Christian communities, motorcycle rider associations, street children and many others we encountered. We also traveled to refugee settlements and host communities in the region.

The official program lasted six months, but the work did not end there. Many of us are continuing with outreach programs to address the needs of the people. As consecrated women serving in many rural communities in Africa, we often find ourselves in the "no-go zones," where others don't go. Yet, with zeal and courage, we continue to disseminate the Good News and the Peace of Christ (Pax Christi).



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In our outreach, we taught the groups about peacebuilding, active nonviolence, conflict prevention and management, healing from violence and trauma, resilience and social cohesion, nonviolent communication, theories of change and transformational leadership. One group even requested financial literacy education.

The impact was quickly visible. After an evaluation, we learned about the immense impact we had made. Participants shared encouraging feedback. One said, "We can now resolve conflict situations in the villages after learning from Sr. Jane Onzia and the peacebuilding process." A member of the Catholic women's group told us, "We are becoming peace champions in our homes as opposed to the previous violent behavioural traits."



(Unsplash/Jacob Hodgson)

We are enthusiastic about the program and have requested that it be extended for a year to realize its full potential. Some sisters, like Sr. Ritah Akello from the Diocese of Lira, are continuing the effort by reaching out to local groups and hosting a radio program on "Radio Wa," with themes tailored to address local needs.

We are grateful for the support of our church leaders. The Vicar General of Lira, Fr. Valente Innocent Opio, promised to help amplify our voices on "Radio Wa." Local bishops and priests have also promised to continue supporting us in our efforts to promote sustainable peace, harmony and development in the region, not only in Northern Uganda, but hopefully, one day throughout the entire country.