



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

Latter Glory of Religions in Busoga CC

Faiths /Traditions Represented: Protestant, Muslim, Catholic and Indigenous Tradition

Location of CC: Namulesa, Jinja-Uganda

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Key Areas of Focus: Peacebuilding and Income Generation

Summary

Latter Glory CC is based out of Busoga, Uganda and consists primarily of Catholic, Muslim, Protestant and Indigenous leaders from the local community. Their CC has worked for years to combat ignorance and mistrust among individuals of different faiths by convening public interfaith dialogues and organizing peace workshops during community events. Anticipating ethnic violence to break out around the 2016 elections, Latter Glory CC is actively working to build strong bridges in their area. As leaders in the community, collaborating together across religious and ethnic lines, they are setting an example of tolerance to the rest of their community. This CC hopes to achieve sustainable social and economic development in their area by using URI's interfaith framework.



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1. *Can you please help me understand the current religious/cultural/political contexts in the area where your CC is working?*

The Latter Glory of Religions was created in 1992 as a result of religious upheavals that started coming up in the Busoga region. There used to be bickering between mostly Muslims and non-Muslims. Though not very pronounced, the animosity between people of different religions occurs silently, with many people harbouring prejudices about the other's faith traditions. This usually confines them to the circles of people with whom they share the same faith, except during development or social occasions such as funeral activities.

In the cultural realm, like elsewhere in Uganda, Busoga region still has strong allegiance to their cultural leaders who play more or less a symbolic leadership role, paying allegiance to the central government domain as the supreme and sovereign entity. The history of the people in Busoga region continues to haunt them to the present day. As settlers who are believed to have emerged from the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, intermarriages at the time were inevitable among the peoples they found in the present day Busoga, such as the *Batenga* and *Balamoji*; and because of that, recurrent fights for power has been common among the different tribes to usurp power. A recent scenario was witnessed during the enthronement of the Kyabazinga William Gabula Nadiope a successor to the late Kyabazinga (king) Wako Muloki in 2011. This has caused an impasse among the people who lost the seat which remains unaddressed up to date. For instance, the losing side, the *Balamoji*, is threatening to boycott the forthcoming 2016 general elections on grounds of government meddling in their cultural affairs.

Even socially, the Busoga region too is faced with rampant school dropout, putting the youth as potential targets to conflict activities. As government fails to create programs targeting the youth, resulting in some youth being ferried overseas to take to military training with majority of the remnants returning to destabilize peace in the region.

2. *Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed where your CC is working?*

Religion and culture reinforce each other and the people we serve, including us religious leaders. People have strong cultural and religious beliefs, whereby where one tends to overlap the other, chaos is inevitable. Therefore given the prevailing circumstances where our people have divisions in the current cultural leadership vis-a-vis the notable government interference in the people's cultural affairs, interfaith bridge building serves as a neutral strategy which can make in the events of intolerance and mistrust. Religion and culture are therefore proven effective tools that can draw people back to the fundamental principles and values of love, respect, tolerance, non discrimination and peace among others.



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3. Can you please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is doing this year?

This year we have new programs but are also continuing with some activities of the previous year. For instance the community based microfinance projects, which benefitted from goats and tree seedlings from URI-GL; we want to expand this project to benefit all the women and their families to help them address their needs of educating and providing health care to their children.

As Latter Glory, we are happy to be behind the opening up of a new university, St Jude University, to address the rampant school dropout rate of both boys and girls. The university is non-discriminatory and open to all religions and all cultures and helps to offer an alternative to orphans and vulnerable children who cannot make it to the traditional universities which often require very high entry points and costly fees. (More details on <http://.go.ug.stjudeuniversity/>).

With funds allowing, we want to undertake community based conflict resolution, transformation, and peace-building to address the row between the *Balamogi tribe* which threatens to split from Busoga Kingdom and have their own king after losing the Kingship to Kyabazinga William Gabula Nadiope as well as boycott the next elections in 2016.

4. Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?

Currently, the threats from the *Balamogi* to split from the Busoga Kingdom serve as our primary motivation. We want to sensitize and engage them in mediation dialogues to help them appreciate non-violent means of resolving conflict. Again, among the interfaith groups, we want to continue bringing the indigenous traditions and traditional religions together by bringing their leaders on board. Our continued partnership with them will gradually influence their mindsets, and encourage them to begin appreciating religious diversity and tolerance.

5. Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not interact or cooperate with each other.

We look at development as something of common value to everyone in society. The social problems that prevail in our societies affect us all, and we don't look at religious or cultural background to address them. As the leadership of Latter Glory, we serve as models for the community by working together as people of different faiths. We are Anglican, Catholic, Muslim and even traditionalists, but our differences in beliefs don't feature anywhere. So when the people see us working together and see no problem with that, they eventually emulate us.



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Public dialogue has proven to be a very effective tool for us and we are able to urge people to refrain from violence, hatred and intolerance and preach peaceful means of resolving differences or conflict. At the public dialogues, the platforms are open to speakers from all different religious and cultural backgrounds. This approach in its own right draws many people together just to merely see their faiths and cultures fairly represented.

We also take advantage of massive gatherings such as cultural, funeral and religious ceremonies as well as political campaigns among others, to speak to the people about peace. This is coupled with implementing projects that target everybody in society. For example, the newly opened St Jude University is all embracing and gives special consideration to orphans and vulnerable children, the women's microfinance project as well as farming groups. Sometimes we organize interfaith prayers that are open to all faiths including Muslims, Christians, Catholics, traditionalists, and others, to share their religious values and norms, thus helping us to address discrimination and intolerance.

6. Given the current contexts, you described, what does your CC hope to achieve?

We hope to achieve tolerance and accommodation of each other. We want our people to refrain from the religious dogmas that often cause them to misunderstand each other's religion and culture. We want religions to be the strength in ensuring social development. In development causes, all people of all cultures and religions everywhere need each other. Once people understand that, then the rest comes easy.

7. How do you see your CC's work improving cooperation among people of different traditions?

Already our CC realized collaboration among members during the last parliamentary elections of 2011 in which we appealed to people on non-violence and were able to restore sanity among the electorate. It is also our plan to organize public dialogues to sensitize the masses on peaceful elections come the 2016 national elections.

Before our inception, it was very rare to see religious clerics mixing or rubbing shoulders with traditionalists as these are often branded by the general society as demonic. However, Latter Glory ministry is able to surpass such attitudes and sentiments by bringing everybody on board for the good of society. For instance, the traditional healer among us is helping to heal people's ailments with indigenous medicine. And as people who appreciate environmental sustainability, we continue to steer tree planting in our region to preserve such indigenous herbs among other things.

8. How is the work of your CC helping to prevent religiously inspired violence or transforming conflicts? (as this in areas with open conflicts)

Apart from the 2011 general elections, the Busoga region has enjoyed relative calm. However, there are pockets of differences created by the recent (2014) enthronement of the Kyabazinga William Gabula Nadiope (the King of Busoga Kingdom) during which some sections are threatening to boycott the forthcoming elections and engage in violent acts. As done in the previous elections of 2011, we plan to organize public dialogues with URI-GL's support to urge the masses to observe peaceful resolution of their differences for a comfortable election process.

9. What are some indicators / observations you see that relations are improving between people of different faiths/cultures in the area where your CC works?



As people of different faith, we collaborate during the different events organized. For instance Sheikh Kibirige, one of the members in the district Khadhi of Jinja; as a Muslim, his school recruits children of different faith. One time, I, a Bishop travelled with Sheikh Kibirige and we accidentally stopped at a pork joint which prompted an expression on the Sheikh's face. To

my surprise he remained calm and simply told the seller he wasn't buying and this is an example of tolerance of each other. Another example is that our continued relationship with Muslims has given unrestricted entrance to mosques as long as we heed to their values.

10. Do you have a specific short story you can share about your work that might inspire other CCs or teach us a lesson about interfaith?

One time, as a Catholic priest, I was invited to lead prayers to dedicate the souls of people who perished in the dam, against the Pentecostals' wish. During the prayers, I stood firmly and gave a scripture reading to calm the situation and the procession took effect.

As a traditional healer, I came to work in a certain community dominated by *Shias* and *Sunnis*. There was one major health facility owned by one of them and people of other religions were restricted from accessing it. After realizing that kind of animosity, I had to help this community address their differences amicably. So I organized a health education seminar and invited all people of all faiths, specifically



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targeting the *Shias, Sunis, Tabliqs*, Catholics and other religions as guest speakers. I also invited speakers from the capital Kampala and surrounding areas to participate in the health talk. At the seminar, the community observed that every religion was represented with all of them discussing health as a common issue that affects everybody. Eventually, some community health committees were nominated and as I talk now, every faith is represented on those committees with all of them working together for the good of their community.

11. How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission or URI?

We always draw core reference to URI's interfaith cooperation strategy where we call upon everybody to participate in the development of their communities. This approach has drawn more people on board, to work together to address common problems without looking at their religious and cultural differences. We hope the continued emphasis of the interfaith cooperation shall make more people appreciate and accommodate each other.



12. Within your CC, you have members from different faiths/cultural traditions. How would you describe cooperation between these members? What are the challenges?

There is a notable mushrooming of various cults or religious sects within the traditional faiths and no one has come up yet to address the problem. And due to ignorance, people tend to polarize the indigenous faith and they don't want to associate with them, forgetting that these existed before them. We are counting on our relations within our membership to engage these sects in a dialogue for improved relations.

13. How is being part of URI helping your CC to achieve its goals?

URI has been a great support to our programs. For example the ten women's groups in Bufuula parish received goats which have already got off-springs. This is a great boost to their income, with the women beneficiaries now being able to meet costs for school fees and food. This is on top of the tree seedlings which URI provided to ensure environmental protection in our communities.

14. How can URI better support your CC in reaching its goals?



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As you know a messiah is not always very popular in his own community, so URI's continued presence and collaboration in our community programs is a great boost for our work. The rich platforms too can be a good way to promote our programs such as the newly opened St Jude University to the outside world. The technical support in terms of capacity building in fundraising, humanities and others shall be a strong incentive to help us expand our programs to other areas such as opening up a youth community centre to address the rampant idleness and criminal activities among the youth to mention but a few.





Bishop Lubogo (second from right); founder of Latter Glory of Religions in Busoga CC, the CC Liaison Officer URI-GL (Extreme right)) and members at the offices of St. Jude University. Below, the CC Liaison Officer URI-GL, May Nakyejwe (extreme left) with Latter Glory members pay a courtesy visit to the Vice Chairperson (second left) who is recovering from a road accident.