CNHPR consults women on national reconciliation agenda

JUBA - The Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation (CNHPR) in collaboration with South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC) and Specialised Committee on Peace and Reconciliation in the National Legislative Assembly (SCPR/NLA) held a two day Women Consultation Workshop with the main aim of understanding and incorporating the views of women in the process of peace and reconciliation in South Sudan.

The two day workshop held under the theme “Women as Agents of Change” attracted over thirty seven women from various organizations which included religious, entrepreneurs, journalists and lawyers groups among others. The forum explored the roles and duties Women can play while sharing their views on how they can at all times observe neutrality in the face of the prevailing situation in the country.

The Secretary General of Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation Dr. Bernard Suwa said that due to the current crisis in the country, women have to be involved in the search for a long lasting peace. He urged women to play their role in the national healing and reconciliation process and to be able to change the bad history of bloodshed and suffering to a history of brotherhood and peaceful coexistence.

The participants shared their views and concerns on the causes and way forward in regard to the current conflict that has shattered the country.
“I was born during war, grew up in war and now likely to produce and raise my children in war, is this going to be the trend for South Sudanese? Has South Sudan become a land of misery, bloodshed and suffering” lamented Gladys Kiden, one of the participants at the consultative forum.

She urged women to take the lead in making peace possible in South Sudan. “It’s time for us women to wake up and bring out the brain and show the love we have for our country, we need to work hand in hand and protect each other” explained Gladys. She further advised women to work together and advocate for better leadership saying that what happened on the 15th December 2013 is a turning point for women to know and advocate for their rights.

In his key note speech, His Grace Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul the Chairperson of the Committee for National Healing Peace and Reconciliation (CNHPR) called on women to spearhead the peace process by embracing unity and shunning divisions based on political and tribal differences. He told women that there is need for all South Sudanese to put together their minds and explore a way out of the current crisis.

Archbishop Daniel Deng also underscored the importance of dialogue, adding that people need to come together and discuss issues that will help correct the past for a better future instead of prizing the past and playing blame games.

“If we don’t engage in dialogue, it will be very difficult for us to bring the current crisis to an end. If we don’t speak together, somebody will take the honors and speak on our behalf and this will never bring lasting peace and that’s why we have formed a platform to work together and speak the same language, the language of peace” emphasized Archbishop Daniel Deng.

The women came up with suggestions that can help arrest the current situation facing the country. The suggestions which are directly to the government include training and professionalizing the army by creating standard military training colleges, taking military barracks out of civilian residential areas, transforming civil service and infrastructural development among others.
Mobilizing for Peace in the Greater Yirol

On March 29th, in Yirol, Lakes State Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul informed the greater Yirol community (both east and west Yirol counties) about the future plans of the Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation (CNHPR). Among those who attended included church leaders, government officials (including executive director Machuror Anyieth from Yirol West, executive director Ajuong Nhial of Yirol East etc.), two paramount chiefs, civil society, and many more totaling at approximately 1,500 people.

His Grace gave a brief history of his past experiences on the subject of peace and reconciliation in South Sudan (2012 Jonglei peace agreement, meeting with George Athore etc.), and his recent appointment as the chairman of CNHPR by presidential decree.

He then went on to describe the organizational structure of the committee (executive members, state representation, special interest groups and state subcommittees, etc.). He explained CNHPR had faced financial challenges in the past but still have undertaken many accomplishments (meeting in Kuron, established national secretariat) despite facing financial difficulties.
His Grace spoke about the future mobilization process that will take place throughout Lakes State and the entire nation. CNHPR intends get to the root causes to the conflicts that trouble southerners by asking the people themselves what is troubling them. “For example, here in Yirol the paramount chief will organize the communities to come talk about issues facing the community internal and externally” (eloping, murder, etc.). CNHPR plans to train 50 peace mobilizers in Lakes state to facilitate community level consultations, which in sequence will reach the payam, county state, and national levels to create a national agenda for reconciliation.

It was described that as the communities discuss their histories together they will begin to talk about forms of justice to right some of the wrongs in the past. There are many traditions in South Sudan that can be utilized and document to serve various types of traditional justice that will work at alongside of “government mandated justice”.

His Grace then to discussed the history of conflict in the country. He explained that since the creation of Sudan people of the Southern region of Sudan have not been allowed to come together, outside forces have persistently divided the citizens for a longtime (e.g. colonialism, Arabs, etc.). When the people of the country finally received their freedom in 2011 they were left traumatized and did not know how to speak with one voice and move in one direction. In the recent crisis of Southerners fighting Southerners. “It is time that we put to an end we need to all talk about what has happened and move forward to peace so our county can develop”.

The congregation dancing and singing enthusiastically followed the Archbishops speech.

Archbishop closed the meeting with a brief message. He thanked everyone for allowing him to peace and said that if the greater Yirol and Bor untied hands the center of South Sudan would be in peace and the peace would spread to the rest of the country.
Dinka and Nuer pastors form an alliance toward Peace and Reconciliation

JUBA: The Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation (CNHPR) held a two day workshop which brought together pastors from Dinka and Nuer communities to discuss ways of coming together to lead the process of peace and reconciliation among their respective Communities.

The two-day workshop which was held under the theme “building the spirit of trust among the Dinka and Nuer pastors” was convened by the Chairperson of CNHPR Archbishop Dr. Daniel Deng Bul and attended by senior clergies from mostly three denominations of; South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical (SSPEC), The Episcopal Church of South Sudan and South Sudan (ECSSS) and the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS). The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan Rev. James Par was among the participants.

The event was an important opportunity for Church leaders to discuss the impact of the current crisis, to hear first-hand the plight on the IDP communities, and to explore how best to respond.

As an agenda on its strategic planning for the process of Peace and Reconciliation, the Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation encourages partners like the church leaders to step up mobilization efforts towards a nationwide peace and reconciliation process.
The Committee called on the pastors to build trust among themselves so that they can effectively lead the process of Peace and Reconciliation.

While addressing 42 pastors at the workshop, Dr. Daniel Deng said that the church has to speak the truth about the targeted and tribal killings carried out on both sides of Nuer and Dinka communities during the crisis. He called on all parties to the conflict to accept that the church is neutral and has to be trusted and recognized as a mediator in the process of peace.

“We have to speak the truth that Nuer and Dinka have committed atrocities against each other. Atrocities have been committed on both communities and we the Church are not party to what happened. We have to be the mediators to bring peace to our communities.” Said Archbishop Deng, adding that the people being killed are the church congregations and therefore, the church should be concerned.

Archbishop Deng also advised the pastors to make peace a locally made product and not to allow their communities to be used as projects by some external elements that come in the name of peace and yet may not really bring peace to the people.

Rev. Paul Bol Kuel of the Presbyterian Church said that the liberation and independence of this nation happened once and for all as a gift from God to the people of South Sudan, and whoever is thinking of another liberation is just planning to destroy the country.

Rev. Peter Joh of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan also maintained a spiritual position of gospel campaigns to preach the word of God as the only way to end hostilities among the South Sudanese communities.

During the two day discussion, pastors discussed and agreed on a number resolutions and modalities that should be employed to facilitate the process of peace and reconciliation.

Among these resolutions, pastors agreed to form an ad-hoc committee that will lead the process of peace and reconciliation among the Nuer and Dinka communities. A pastors committee comprising of seven members from both Nuer and Dinka communities was formed and will take the lead in conducting consultative meetings with government officials, IDPs and their respective communities.

In a quest for peace in the country, the pastors agreed to lead a peaceful marching in Juba and other areas under South Sudan Council of Churches to denounce use of violence as a means to resolve political differences.

In his closing remarks, Archbishop Deng told the pastors that he had heard what the church leaders from the two communities had to say, and that CNPHR will work to support them and the Seven Member Committee in promoting national peace and reconciliation.