

# THE PROVINCE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF SOUTH SUDAN (ECSS)



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*DEPARTMENT OF MISSION & OUTREACH*

## THE YOUTH CONFERENCE REPORT IN IMVEPI HELD ON 18<sup>TH</sup> – 20<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2022 VENUE: IMVEPI SECONDARY SCHOOL



**Contents**

Background for Youth Conference ..... 3

Vision statement..... 3

Mission..... 3

Strategies..... 3

Preparation for the conference ..... 4

    The Executive Committee..... 4

    Transportation of youth..... 4

    Venue of the conference ..... 5

    Accommodation ..... 5

    Budget and Financing the conference..... 5

    Feeding..... 6

Youth conference ..... 6

    Theme and sub topics..... 6

    Facilitators..... 7

    Methodology ..... 7

Achievements:..... 8

Impact of the conference..... 9

Testimonies/voices of youths..... 11

Challenges..... 13

Prayer Points ..... 14

Conclusion ..... 15

## Background for Youth Conference



The resolution of the Diocesan Standing Committee Meeting directed the Diocese to give priorities for the youths and children. We responded by declaring 2022 as a year for the youths. All stakeholders were invited for a workshop and through brainstorming and SWOT analysis an effective roadmap for the youth ministry was designed. The youth conference in Imvepi is a result of this.

## Vision statement

The Episcopal Diocese of Liwolo, envision Christ centred, Holy Spirit filled and holistically transformed lives and communities.

## Mission

We love and honour God and loving people (the hurting world) and to restore human dignity through evangelism, discipleship, loving and selfless services, pursue justices for all, peace, healing and reconciliation and to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and our home.

## Strategies

1. Formation of Bible study groups, lobbying for Bibles, study materials and trainings
2. Youth fellowship every week
3. Quarterly youth conference.
4. Education and vocational training
5. Talent development through sports and games
6. Entrepreneurship
7. Leadership development

## Preparation for the conference

### The Executive Committee

The Diocese of Liwolo ensured that an executive structure was formed to spear head the whole conference. They made the major decisions for the success of the Youth Conference in Imvepi. Sub committees were also formed to coordinate all the areas. They included the finance committee, the logistic committee, the welfare committee, and the accommodation committee. This logic ensured effective collaboration and promoted team spirit for work for the success of the Youth Conference.

### Transportation of youth



The overloaded lorry transporting youths to Mijale

The logistic committee tried their best to ensure that many youths could attend the youth conference by hiring cars and a lorry to pick youths from different points. But the number of the youths were many and could not all be transported. Many were left out because the budget could not allow us to hire more means of transport. Some few youths came to the conference riding bicycles because of their burning desire to attend the conference. Some youths from Rhino Camp, Omugo and those within Imvepi Refugee settlement came on foot to the venue. It was their own commitment for the conference.

## Venue of the conference



The administration of Imvepi Secondary School accepted our request to host this conference. Particularly we want to thank the Headmistress for her immense support in ensuring that this Youth conference took place in her school. The environment was conducive, it had many trees which provided shade and fresh air for the people during the conference. The compound was large enough to accommodate all the people. Most importantly, it had a playing ground which gave the youths opportunity to play football in the evening.

## Accommodation

All the youths who came from Mijale, Rhino Camp, Omugo Camp and those from Arua were provided accommodation within the venue. The school administration offered some of the classroom blocks to be used for accommodation. Girls were given one block and the boys were given another block. These ensured that the youths woke up early in the morning to begin the day and go to bed late so they can praise the Lord in the evening. Bishop spent Friday and Saturday nights with the youths in the Camp. That was his commitment for the youths, to eat with them, play with them and more so teach them with the Word and the Christian way of life.

## Budget and Financing the conference

Raising the Budget for the youth conference was another hand of God in work. The youths and the refugees were able to raise an amount of 1,412,600 UGX. Many local people who didn't have money gave items in kind. These included flour and beans to support the conference because of its need and importance. We thank Cress UK/DOL who supported us with an amount of 8,809,800 UGX. We also want to thank Pastor Uche and his team for supporting us with an amount of 5,645,000 UGX. Our overall working budget was 15,867,400 UGX. The budget was realized from those three sources and it facilitated the youth conference for 4 days from Wednesday at the time of arrival to Saturday at the time of departure. These helped in the transportation of the youths, fuelling of the cars and motor bikes, purchasing food, accommodation and venue, etc. We thank the Lord for His provision.

## Feeding



During the conference 3 meals were provided which included breakfast, lunch and supper. There was enough food for every participant who came for the conference. The participants also enjoyed eating meat during the conference. We had a very good team in the kitchen who ensured food is prepared on time and it's enough for the youths and the facilitators.

## Youth conference

### Theme and sub topics

This conference was done in Imvepi refugees settlement from 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> August 2022 under a theme from **John 15:7 “if Ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”**. The following topics were deeply expounded with skilful and gifted teachers and evangelists: forgiveness, reconciliation, relationship, career guidance, Father’s heart of Love. The subtopics were carefully selected to meet the needs of the youths, the areas they are struggling in and how they could be fully involved in serving God. This conference also provided youths with huge opportunity for socialising, meeting and making new friends and strong bonds were built.

## Facilitators



We had both national and international facilitators during the conference. They were all well experienced in their topics. The youths benefited so much from the sharing of their real life scenarios and circumstances. This encouraged the youths. They included Rt Rev Joseph Aba, Pastor Uche and the Team from the US, Canon Charles Kenyi, the Head Teacher among others who poured out their lives greatly to the young generation through this conference.

## Methodology

Several methods were used to bring the gospel home to the youths and these include; praise and worship, dancing, bible study, teaching, illustrations, separating the boys and girls during the relationship sessions with the youths. On the first day boys and girls speak alone with help of a facilitator of their same sex/gender. This gave youths an opportunity to speak openly and ask questions on matters of relationship, and suitable answers, counselling and prayers were provided. On the second day the youths go back to their groups and it is at this time that the female facilitator speaks to the boy's group of what ladies expected from a man and the role of a man. She uses her personal experience of relationship or marriage and addresses the issues raised by the boys. The male facilitator does the same with girl's groups.

It was an eye opener and source of encouragement but challenging as well. Many youths benefited so much as evident in our post conference review where some of the interviewed youths who attended the conference strongly agreed that topics on relationship, forgiveness, the father's heart of God of Love and career guidance impacted them most.

## Achievements:



- The mobilisation of the youths for the conference from the different Refugee Settlements and from the border, Mijale was done successfully. The turn up of the youths was great including some church leaders – both men and woman.
- Contributions from the Christians from the different churches within the camps and from the border, Mijale was awesome. These included Maize grains=400kg, beans=30kgs, Money=1,412,600 UGX and some other items like fire wood, sleeping materials, utensils, chairs, basins and buckets for bathing. This shows the level of commitment of the local people towards this conference. The local people welcomed the conference warmly.
- The facilitation during the three days of conference went very well, the facilitators did their best to explain the topics which made all the youths to learn and understand very well.
- The youths were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. This could be clearly seen during the time of prayer and the call to the altar, how the youths were moved during prayer and how the Holy spirit led them to pray.
- The conference brought unity among the youths, after a very long time, the youths were seen doing things together, studying the word together, working together, and most importantly the youths from the different camps working together was a great achievement of the conference.



S/N	Description	Male	Female	Total
01	New born again	54	90	<b>144</b>
02	People who received counselling	73	94	<b>167</b>
03	People who attended the conference	501	885	<b>1,386</b>

**The table illustrating the statistics collected at the conference**

- The dedication of the young Christian family members in preparing meals, setting rooms and places for feeding the entire participants during the conference made our conference programme successful. All people were well fed in the conference and the youths were so grateful for meals.
- The spirit of team work and encouragement made most of our planned programmes for the conference go well. Right from the leadership of the Archdeacon of Imvepi Refugees settlement, pastors, Revival leaders, Mothers Unions leaders, Young Christian family leaders, Youth leaders in different churches, the administration of Imvepi Secondary School and the members of the organizing committee team work was evident.
- No interruptions from rain during the conference time. This was God who answered our prayers as we did not have a room that could accommodate the entire participants for the conference in case of rain. The participants sat under the tree shades and everything went well and there was enough space for sitting during the sessions until the end.

## Impact of the conference



The conference was one of its kind which happened for the very first time where over 1000 youths were brought together and more than 5 topics were taught for them. Many of the youths came to the Conference expecting to fellowship with one another and praise the Lord together.

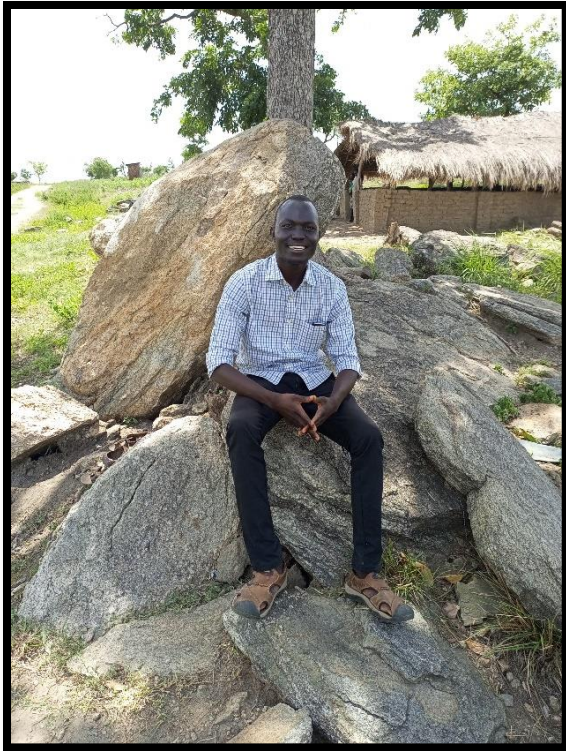
However, everything changed when the youths met the reality of the conference, many youths have been battling with forgiveness in their hearts particularly having to leave their own land to live in refugee camps. Many youths have been battling with issues in relationships, entering into relationship prematurely, and struggling with handling pressures from peers. Many of the youths felt they were not good enough to serve God the right way. All these questions and battles they have been battling with in their minds and the hearts of most of the youths in the camp were brought to the conference.

This conference provided answers to these questions and at the end of the lesson on forgiveness, many youths came out to confess their sin of unforgiveness. These images of those that caused atrocities had for long remained in their minds were cleared and they forgave the people who caused such heinous acts. We saw how the youths brought out questions and experiences about their relationship life through questions. The Facilitators used two sessions to handle this issue and many youths learnt to leave childish ways and reason like adults and do things like adults. The teachings were coined with scriptures and many youths were guided in their relationship life. It was one of the biggest impact for the youths.

We saw the youths who felt they had gone astray coming back to God. It was a conference of connecting back to God with many youths coming to the altar as their commitment to start again with God particularly at the end of the story of the lost son. During the teaching of the Loving heart of God the father, the youths were heartbroken to learn about the true nature of God. They learned that God is love and His desire for us to come back, how He will embrace us when we come back to Him. That to us was the climax of the conference, the youths surrendering their lives back to the Creator and availing themselves to God so he can use them the way He wants.

Finally, many youths who were bound by the devil were set free. They went home in full freedom in Christ Jesus ready to be models to youths who did not attend the conference. A new light was ignited in the lives of the youths who came for the conference. The youths went back completely different. They were changed by the Word of God being expounded through His servants. We really thank God for this Conference because this is just the beginning of building a new community which is transformed by the Word of God

## Testimonies/voices of youths



My name is Murye Scopas Edward, one of the youths who embraced this conference, this is what I have to say about the conference "I am so thankful to be part of this great and yet refilling Youth conference in Imvepi 2022.

I came to the conference with little expectations just but to hear the word of God and fellowship with fellow youths from different camps and archdeaconries.

However, the conference turned out to be an answer to the questions that have been running down in my mind, and my heart for so long, particularly questions about how to serve God better, how to relate with my friends, and more so boy - girl relationship, I have struggled a lot in this area, but the facilitators gave helpful tips and teachings on this. I went back home and reformed my thinking about relationships.

This conference has also been a moment for me to reconnect back to God, the Father, it helped me realize how I have gone away from the Lord, just like the story of the Lost son in Luke,

I was challenged and took a personal commitment to start fresh again, to be filled yet again with the Holy Spirit of God, and I was prayed for and my faith was lifted and strengthened at the same time.

I never came back the same way I went, this was possible because of this conference, therefore I want to Thank God, friends, and the Diocese of Liwolo for organizing this conference specifically for the Youths.

It's my desire and prayer that this conference will continue every Year. My cry to the Diocese is that they should never forget us the Youths because we are so vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy, this conference will enable us to take solid ground in the word of God and that we will be renewed every time and again.

May God bless You abundantly as you continue to pray for us the Youths.”



My name is Abate Julious Chaplain; “I thank God for making me part of the youth’s conference conducted in Imvepi refugee settlement. It was very amazing.

I got a lot of inspiration especially the topics covered and the messages preached gave me a lot of insights that would help me move forward in a positive direction.

My heart, soul and mind are completely transformed and renewed.

I therefore wish to use this opportunity to say such conferences be done at least twice a year so that we remain cemented in the love and unity of Christ Jesus. “



My name is Grace, am a south Sudanese refugee leaving in Imvepi Refugee settlement, this is what I have to say about the youth conference. “This is my heartfelt gratitude to all who God Almighty has used, more especially the topic of the Father’s heart of love, by his lordship Bishop and the carrier guidance. This has helped shape my understanding about the heart of God, and the heart of man, there is a very big difference. Knowing that God loves me with all my incompleteness gives me a reason to come back to his throne of mercy and be washed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. This was an encouragement to me. Bishop may the Almighty God bless you and continue to use you as our beloved father. The career guidance has opened my eyes about taking studies seriously. Making the right career choices based on the job market was another thing all together. Therefore, I want to thank the Diocese of Liwolo so much for bring us this conference, please don’t leave us alone, come again with more teachings for us, we rarely get these opportunities. It’s my prayer that the Lord continue to bless the Diocese so they can have funds to organize such conference at least two times in a year if not three times. I am going back home to begin a new chapter of my life.”

## Challenges



- The turnout of the youths did not reach the target as it was planned because of transport challenges in the different camps and from the border, Mijale.
- The funds for supporting the conference were sent late, it delayed most of the planned activities for the conference.
- Lack of enough saucepans and utensils for preparing food and utensils for serving the guests.
- Rooms given for the accommodation were not enough for all the people in the conference.
- The music system for praise and worship had problems.
- The days of the conference were very few and time was not enough to expound all the interesting topics
- There were no Bible studies/ Bible Quizzes included for the youths this is because of lack of discipleship materials for study.
- Games and sports were not inclusive. Only football was available, the youths lacked skipping ropes, netballs among others.
- Many of the youths who came for the conference had no Bibles, there is great need for Bibles for the youths.
- Lastly, many of the youths who came for the Bible study were dropouts from school, their stories differently hurt, how the war had made it difficult for them to go to school due to lack of fees.

## Prayer Points



- The conference should be conducted three times in a year. This will help the youths in the camps stay connected to God. The students have three holidays in a year, they have December – January, April - May and August – September holidays, therefore, the youths recommended that each time they are for holidays, the Diocese should organize a youth conference for them. This will keep the word of God alive, and keep them focus in the path of righteousness. This is because in the school, the way of life is completely different from God, the youths are under the attack of the enemy particularly when they are loaded with the worldly values, therefore pray with us particularly for funds for these conferences. Our next big conference for the youths will be in January next year, and therefore, we ask you to pray for funds, we need about 5000USD to be able successfully carry out this conference, whatever part you are able to give will help a great deal.
- Most of the youths who came for the conference requested for Bibles, It's one powerful tool we need for the young Bible to establish them in the firm foundation of the youths, many gave their lives to Jesus, however, they lack Bibles and therefore pray for us for more Bibles to support the youth ministry.

- The youths also requested for Bible study materials as many of them have formed Bible study groups and others have committed themselves to start Bible study even in their local areas. We lack effective Bible study materials for carrying out these Bible studies. We ask you to pray with us.
- In the conference, the youths who have dropped out from school have expressed their great interest to go back to school, they have requested for to be supported in vocational trainings so they can acquire hand-on skills so they can be able to support themselves. Some who are bright and because of the war, their parents lost all the available resources and therefore could not afford to raise fees requested for scholarship program for them. Therefore, we ask you to pray about this need so God can open ways for this poor youths to study and be able serve their communities better.
- Finally pray for more playing materials for the youths, they have a lot of energy to play. When they come together, one way they social is through exploiting their talents in sports activities like football, netball, volleyball, singing among others. We only had two footballs which was not enough. Therefore, we ask that you pray for us so God can provide more footballs, netballs, volleyballs and skipping robes for the youths. This will help boost their mental capacity too which is recipe for a good health.

## Conclusion



We thank Almighty God for his working hand towards this conference and for making us run it successfully. May His will be done greatly in the lives of the youths but also in the lives of those who contributed physically, prayerfully and financially to ensure the conference was a success.