



CULTIVATING GLOBAL ONENESS IN CHRIST

Dear Friends and Supporters of Life Together International (LTI),

I hope and pray you are all coping well as our world faces the coronavirus pandemic. I am grateful for all of you, every day of my life, and I pray God protects you from all harm.

Life Together International is flourishing, even in the midst of a world crisis and a trying time I've had to face. In fact, God is using your support in amazing ways, in spite of my challenges! In a Facebook post on January 23, 2020 (which would have been the day after I had arrived in Uganda) I wrote a message about a neurological issue I was experiencing. It came upon me with such intense and violent pain that I could not safely travel to Africa. In the post, I said this nerve pain had *"stopped me in my tracks"* and I was devastated that I couldn't go back to Uganda until doctors could diagnose the problem.

I was immensely disappointed because I was looking forward to visiting all our LTI girls' projects that you have made possible in Sebei. Our 17 income-producing groups have graduated and then initiated between 5 and 8 girls in each group, a wonderful milestone that your donations made possible. Also, I couldn't wait to check out all the new developments you helped provide at Agape School in Central Uganda; a school we have served in partnership with Granville Federated Church since 2015.

I had been extremely excited about leading a conference for the Sabinu men in Eastern Uganda. Preparations for that conference went on throughout the entire year of 2019. *You*, LTI's supporters, donated enough funds to bring 300 men to this important Men's Conference. I was crushed to think those men might miss the important information we had for them...but God turned my tears to smiles!

Let me begin by telling the two main reasons why this men's conference was so timely & important:

First: We learned in January 2019 that forty men had forced their wives to go through Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), even though the surrounding communities had abandoned the practice. This happened in two of the most remote areas of Sebei, Riwo and Kwosir. My Ugandan team and I believed God was leading us to hold a men's conference, focusing on the men in those areas. God had used our teaching to persuade thousands of Sabinu to abandon the practice of FGM. We sincerely believed that if we could reach them, God would use the same message to persuade these men to end the practice as well. **Miraculously, the Riwo and Kwosir men agreed to come to our conference!**

Second: I am deeply concerned for every girl who is forced into FGM. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Muslim women are also mutilated. Since 2011, I have been praying that God would send us *just one Muslim Imam* who would listen to our arguments. The Qur'an does not call for FGM. Since much of our reasoning against FGM is based on the biological science all human beings share, I felt the Muslim community would consider ending the practice as well.

After eight years God finally answered my prayer! In fact, the Lord did far more than bring us together with one Imam who would listen. He connected LTI with the Kadhi of Sebei, a Muslim judge who holds court over every Muslim in the entire region! Having him come to our men's conference could become a step toward setting Muslim women free from FGM.

You can see why this was going to be an important conference.

Here's the amazing story of how God brought us together with Kadhi Sabila. It is a picture of how God uses *everything*, even the worst things, to bring good out of evil! After the vicious uprising of men who forced their wives to go through FGM, the Supreme Council of Clan Elders in those areas called a meeting. They wanted to find out what happened and what could be done to stop it from happening again. At that meeting, one of the leaders was Kadhi Sabila.

Thankfully, Life Together International's Director of African Operations, Delmark Mangusho, was invited to the meeting. He was given an opportunity to speak about what we have been teaching since 2011. Delmark briefly described our teaching on how the female body works. He told the men that FGM destroys the part of women's bodies that is God-designed to stimulate a large release of oxytocin, the "Bonding Hormone," during sexual climax.

But without the female body part that FGM destroys, a woman cannot climax. As a result, she cannot bond as powerfully to her husband as he can to her. To make matters worse, a mutilated woman's sexual experience is one of great pain caused by FGM scarring. Her agony stimulates her brain to release the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline, known as the "Fight or Flight Hormones." These stress hormones are the opposite of the bonding hormone, oxytocin. The mutilated woman's brain tells her she is in danger, and she must either "fight" the source of her pain or "flee" from him.

Thousands of Sabiny now see that FGM does exactly the opposite of what they intended it to do.

Instead of forcing a woman's faithfulness, painful sex forces her brain to think of her husband as a danger from which she must escape. Men who have been to LTI meetings now understand why their wives despise sex, and want to run away from their marriages.

At the meeting with the Supreme Clan Elders, Delmark announced that we were planning a Men's Conference in January 2020 to teach more about this. He invited all the men to come. The Muslim Kadhi was intrigued by Delmark's message. After the meeting he approached Delmark and said,

"I have wanted to end FGM in our Muslim community for a long time, but there has never been a compelling argument. Why can't I come to this men's conference and bring some of my Imams?"

Delmark knew this is exactly what I had been praying for since 2011. He welcomed the Kadhi to join the conference and bring his Imams. Throughout the year of 2019, I had been communicating with Kadhi Sabila via text in hopes that he would come to trust me. I wanted him to feel comfortable about coming to a conference in which the main teacher would be an American Christian woman. We had forged a warm relationship and were both looking forward to meeting each other in person.

What an amazing answer to prayer!

Help from Dr. Larry J. Young, Emory University's expert on the science of pair bonding

One of the most exciting things I wanted to do at the men's conference was to unpack a group of six short video segments from an interview I conducted with **Dr. Larry J. Young**. (Thank you Emory University for recording and editing our discussion.) As one of the world's foremost experts on the hormone oxytocin, I knew this information from Dr. Young would make a huge impact on the men.

In the video segments Dr. Young answered these questions:

1. How does the release of oxytocin help people have better relationships and bond more deeply in faithful love?
2. What are the health benefits of being in a bonded, loving relationship where oxytocin flows?
3. What happens to the relationship between husband and wife when the mutilated woman's body experiences only painful sex?
4. If a wife is cut, what are some other ways a husband can release oxytocin in her and improve bonding between them?
5. Does a woman's body release oxytocin when she knows her husband is being "loving and kind" *only* to get sex?
6. Why is it important for fathers (as well as mothers) to release oxytocin in their children by being tender and loving toward them?

(These videos will be on www.lifetogetherinternational.org in June!)

These God-given insights, blended with God-created science, have inspired many communities to abandon FGM. I couldn't wait to teach again using these valuable videos of Dr. Young. But just ten hours before my departure, this nerve pain overwhelmed me and I could not travel.



"What does this mean, Lord?" I asked. "I've prayed 8 years and now the Kadhi is coming, the Muslim men are coming, the Riwo and Kwosir men are coming. Dr. Young's vital information is ready to be unpacked. Everything is paid for. And now the conference has to be called off because I can't travel?"

God was definitely up to something big! I needed to be prayerful and faithful to learn what it was.

I soon began to see three abundantly clear reasons why God stopped me in my tracks!

The first reason came into focus a few days after I told Delmark I was too sick to travel. At that point, it was less than a week before the conference was set to start. Delmark told me it was too late to stop the men from coming. ***“We will give them tea, talk to them for an hour and send them home,”*** he said. Almost all the conference teachings were in my head, not written down. For that reason, there seemed to be no other solution than to send the men home.

After a couple of days, I started to think more clearly. “Lord, our team stepped in last February when I was recovering from surgery.” I prayed. “They used a ready-made booklet on biblical equality, and were able to lead one-day seminars very well. You know the state I’m in Lord. *Is it possible you could help me get all the material that’s in my brain written down in a way they could use?* And could you help me make a PowerPoint that will help them explain Dr. Young’s videos and the written material? Could I possibly put all this together *in 2 days* so they can hold the conference themselves? Do I dare ask them to run the entire conference alone with only 2 days to go?”

God’s answer, “Ask them!”

Team’s answer, “We will!”

By that time, my nerve pain was coming under control and I wanted to work. As our team prepared to launch into teaching this valuable material for the first time without me, I asked people on Facebook to pray for them by name: Delmark, Tina, Bosco, David and Joyce. With God’s help, I got all the material to them just *four hours* before the conference started! ***And they were amazing!***



Team Member Bosco Teaches Passionately

Lesson One: Leading alone taught the team *and me* that they are ready to deliver and advance the message on their own!

Here’s what happened!

The conference was attended by 270 of the 300 men who were invited. **Seventy five of the men were Muslim leaders!**

The team chose Romans 12:16a as the theme of the conference, “Live in harmony with one another...” In the PowerPoint (right), I put photos of black couples engaging each other: working together, smiling, kissing, hugging, laughing and communicating—all oxytocin releasing activities, and all things that help create harmony between husband and wife.

The biblical theme of harmony, along with Dr. Young’s interview topics, the men’s discussions together, even pictures of what harmony can look like all began to converge. They realize that harmony is quite different from what they had always thought. Before this conference, “harmony” was what a man got in his home when he wielded his power.

Now, they want the real thing!

A prominent local leader stood and said, *“There is a difference between the way a Sabiny man makes love, and a non Sabiny. We now learn that the way we make love is not manifested as love because we are still very authoritative. We have been treating our wives as subjects. Even our children have not enjoyed our touch and smiles as presented by Patti and Larry.”*



Delmark explains how these pictures show harmony



After watching the clips of Dr. Young and listening to the team flesh out the material, the men gathered in small groups (left) to discuss what they had just learned and what they should do going forward. Even with Tina and Joyce in the room these men were so moved that they stood and spoke freely. That shows how powerfully this message impacted them. The more they learned, the more they spoke with complete openness in all their discussions.

When they showed the clip of Dr. Young explaining what happens in a woman’s body when she has painful sex, Delmark said “You could hear a pin drop in the room.” All the men finally understood that when their wives refuse sex, they are not being selfish or defiant. They are in pain!

The negative impact of domination was sinking in and they realized that FGM is one expression of that domination. These men understood for the first time that FGM had not helped their marriages; it had all but destroyed them!

But now, new hope was beginning to grow.

God did miracles among all the men. After the conference, Kadhi Sabila sent me a long text message telling me the impact these teachings had on the men. Here's what he said:

“Some men stood out and spoke boldly that they didn't have peace in their families. That their wives had abandoned them early and slept in separate rooms or beds and that, as a result of FGM, they had no sexual feelings completely. A 52 year old man spoke with a lot of sadness while narrating his own ordeal and said he didn't know what to do with himself. He vowed never to let his daughters undergo circumcision. That's when I realized many men were suffering in silence. In a nutshell, I must say the approach of sensitizing men and using them to address FGM was the right thing. They will play a very big role in supporting their women and daughters to end this barbaric culture which is up to now still being valued in some of our communities.”



Man tells about his marriage ordeal

The man pictured right, stood and said, “My wife is mutilated and she had lost interest in having relations with me. But this conference has given **a ray of hope** and some light on how to approach her. For example taking time to talk with her; touching, smiling, sharing some gifts, and showing her true love. **I had lost hope, but now I will try again.**”



LTI's Men's Conference gives husbands hope

As I sat at home and listened to Delmark describe how powerfully God had used this message, the second lesson God was trying to get through to me came into sharp focus.

Lesson Two: I must focus my energy on writing!

I was powerless to get on that plane in January. But God was powerful in his communication to me that he intends to use this unique message, *regardless of who delivers it!* I couldn't have seen more clearly that God *expects* me to write it down for the sake of others!

Churches in Sebei have asked me to put this message in a Bible Study form to be used in churches throughout the region. Girls in our groups want to share it with friends and family. Participants from other countries who heard me teach in Kenya want this message in written form so they can use it in Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya. **I now feel the urgency to get it done.**

Urgency! That brings me to the third lesson God has been showing me while staying home.

Lesson Three: We must create many more mentoring and income-producing projects for uncut girls!

Here is a story only God could have orchestrated!

After the conference was over, Delmark told me that none of the men wanted to leave. He said, “There was a sense we were all in a Holy Spirit bubble; as if we were standing on holy ground. Everyone was sad to leave that place of such profound change.”

As I mentioned earlier **Riwo** and **Kwosir** were two of the villages where men forced their wives to be cut in 2019? On that last day of the men’s conference, forty men *from Riwo* came to Delmark and said, “We are now changed. From this very day forward we 40 from Riwo have formed an association of men. We will be called, **Riwo Anti-FGM Men.**”

True to their word, the leader of the group called Delmark the very next day from Riwo. He said they had already registered their organization with the local government. They insisted that Delmark travel to their village and hold a community dialogue meeting. They hoped Delmark could win over the community so that they would allow LTI to begin projects for their daughters.



Riwo Anti-FGM Men in orange tees & blue caps supplied by LTI

This is phenomenal! In 2018, this community had never heard our message. In 2019, they cut their wives and daughters. In 2020, God used our message to change their hearts completely!

The Riwo men asked Delmark if LTI would fund Tee-shirts and caps for their association. They wanted the shirts to say, “**Riwo Anti-FGM Men**” and the caps to say “**Stop FGM.**” They wanted to show their community they are serious.

I was absolutely thrilled!

To be willing to wear a (very bright!) anti-FGM tee shirt and cap for all to see exhibits a complete turnaround in the hearts of these men. And, it shows a commitment to that change for the sake of their daughters. **Thanks to all of you**, there was enough money left over from the conference to supply necessities for a community dialogue (tents, chairs, soda, and travel for Delmark), as well as tee shirts and caps for the newly-minted *Riwo Anti-FGM Men* (above). ***You made those men look sharp!!***

The community was won over by the complete change in the Riwo Anti-FGM Men and Delmark’s presentation. They asked LTI to start income-producing projects in Riwo for their uncut girls.

Yes! Oh yes we will!

Men all over Sebei are recognizing the value of their daughters, wives and all women in ways they never did before. LTI’s income-producing projects are helping hundreds of Sabinu young women finally understand their significance as daughters of God, full members of humanity, and valued members of their communities.

But Riwo girls are starting from scratch.



Lydia and Delmark Meet Riwo Girls

They have been hindered from thinking of themselves as anything more than an insult—a “**WOMAN!**” **Worker Of Man Appointed Naturally**. Riwo girls, and many other daughters of men who came to our conference, need our help to reach more of their potential and to keep their bodies intact.

Lydia, in the green blouse (pictured above and below), is a Christian community organizer from Riwo.



About 50 Uncut Young Women Want to Join LTI Group

Lydia has accepted to be our first mentor in Riwo. We asked her to choose 15 girls who would be willing to refuse FGM. Nearly 50 girls were ready to commit! They are excited to be a part of our groups now that their fathers are on board.

The first thing we want to teach our girls is that they have a voice of their own. They can decide for themselves what skills they would like to learn. The girls in Riwo want to learn how to use sweater knitting machines. On the mountain, it can become quite cool. Everyone needs sweaters.

Sweater making will be an exciting new type of project for us, and it has good potential to be lucrative for our new girls. Also, after learning about the Bukwo girls and others who are making bread, they would like us to build our 4th bakery in Riwo and teach them to bake bread commercially.

Fifty girls? That’s too many to be mentored by one leader, and far too many to share the few machines we can afford to supply right away. The girls will have to be divided and some will have to wait until the funds can be raised to provide for another group of girls.

Soon after his meeting in Riwo, the men of Kwoisir contacted Delmark for a community dialogue in their village. Kwoisir is the other area where men forced their wives to be cut. Though the men from our conference have been radically changed, they need back up from LTI to convince their community!



Local Leader welcomes Delmark and David to Kwoisir

Delmark went to Kwoisir March 14, 2020. Upon arrival, he learned that many in the community of Kwoisir still expect girls to be cut, even the Christians. They wait until after marriage so that the husband and in-laws can influence (stalk, harass, shame) the new wife into submitting to FGM. Girls are told a lie that in 2018 the Anti-FGM Law was adjusted for Kwoisir so that girls could be cut there. One leader told Delmark, “This is a cutting year. It’s good you have come early. Maybe by December there will be no cutting.”

After the outdoor community meeting, Delmark moved the leaders and girls inside to talk about what will be required of the community if they want to work with Life Together International. **First**, there must be no cutting! Delmark had been told that some of the women in the room were traditional mentors and surgeons who came to see what LTI would give them *not* to cut girls.

He flatly told them, *“Even if you have been promised gifts by others (the government), why should we reward you? We reward the people who don’t cut, and the girls who choose not to be cut. Get right with God, and then if you cut no one, we will work with you.”* The girls all clapped and cheered!

This shy, but courageous girl (right) stood up to speak. Trembling, she said, *“I am very grateful you have come to Kwoisir. I am the most scared girl in this room. I do not want to go through that FGM pain.”* Delmark said her passionate speech was the bravest thing he has seen a girl do in front of male local leaders.

Sixty girls in Kwoisir (below) want to make sweaters and learn to sew. There is already a wonderful Christian woman there who we can hire to train them...when the funds arrive.



Will you help us keep these precious Kwoisir and Riwo girls safe from FGM?



Hopeful girls from Kwoisir need our help

The meetings in Riwo and Kwoisir were powerful. But, we know if we don’t act while the interest is high, these commitments may wane and vulnerable girls will suffer unspeakable abuse in December.

It will cost an estimated amount of **\$265 per girl** to start sweater-making and sewing groups. The longer it takes us to get these young women into income-producing groups, the more vulnerable they become. **But, Delmark says, “A girl who earns her own money cannot be pushed around by anybody!”** And we have seen that truth in action.

Will you please help us get as many girls as possible into groups where they learn about God’s love for them, acquire life-long skills to pull them out of poverty, and gain the inner strength to stand up to their culture.

Together, we can give girls an honorable living and keep them safe from FGM!

Do you believe it? **Let’s do it!**



Riwo young women hoping to begin their own knitting center with your help!

My three health challenge lessons show me that God was NOT allowing me to be “stopped in my tracks,” only “stopped” in the particular “tracks” in which I was traveling!

Staying home was not a *roadblock* to LTI’s calling; it was a *roadway* to new team ministry. God didn’t allow our message to be *silenced*; he proved it must be *amplified*. Our ministry to girls is not *ending*; God intends it to be *diversified* and *multiplied*.

You are vital to the success of this growing ministry!

If you are not already a monthly donor, will you please become one? Monthly givers are the hope for the future of this work. I will soon begin applying for grants and I’ve learned that one of the first questions grant foundations ask is, “How much do you raise through monthly supporters and how many do you have?” They are looking to see if others believe in the ministry. Your monthly gift will help LTI raise even more funds through grants.

If you are already a monthly supporter, THANK YOU so much! Your sacrifice is enormously appreciated! If you would like to help a little more, will you consider increasing your donation in any amount? Maybe you would like to give an extra gift once a year on your birthday, or the birthday of a loved one, or the holiday of your choice! Several of you give to LTI because a friend told you about us. Will others of you also become “Friend raisers”? One supporter’s company matched his annual giving to LTI. What a gift! Could your company do that, too?



Random LTI moment finding girls baking in Ngaimbirir

On his way to Kwoisir, Delmark happened to pass our bakery in Ngaimbirir. It has been open and working since 2017. He found these girls joyfully making rolls. He was ecstatic to see this random moment in the life of LTI’s ministry. Your gifts to these projects really matter!

Let’s put more girls to work in Riwo and Kwoisir!

Will you:

Help sustain all projects through monthly giving?

Donate to girls in any amount	\$?
Sponsor 1 girl =	\$265
Sponsor 2 friends or 2 sisters =	\$530
Sponsor 1 group of 15 girls =	\$3,975

We are on the cusp of doing *life together* more *internationally* than ever before!

Next to God, you are and have been the key to EVERYTHING Life Together accomplishes! Thank you!

With gratitude and humble thanks,

Rev. Patti Ricotta ~ President, Life Together International

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