

# “Diversity and Inclusion: From Rhetoric to Collective Faith Action”

## Faith to Action Network Convention

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Nairobi, Kenya  
7–9 December, 2021



# Contents

Acronyms.....	4
1.0 Background .....	7
1.1 About Faith To Action Network .....	7
1.2 Conference Objectives .....	8
1.3 Conference organizers .....	8
1.4 Participants.....	9
1.5 Structure and methodology.....	9
2.0 Opening plenary.....	11
3.0 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.....	14
3.1 No Longer Silent: Southern Africa Faith Leaders Support Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights for All .....	14
3.2 Adolescent SRHR and the role of FBOs: Lessons from West Africa .....	18
3.3 Strategizing for a constructive faith voice in global advocacy spaces .....	20
3.4 Faith-based approaches towards youth sexuality in fragile African countries: parents advancing SRHR for youth.....	23
3.5 Sud Kivu’s experience: an interfaith caravan to promote family health and well-being.....	25
3.6 Faith actors and faith leaders increasing uptake of child spacing and family planning information and services in Kenya.....	31
3.7 Intergenerational partnerships for adolescent and youth SRHR .....	33
4.0 Women’s Rights and Gender Justice.....	35
4.1 Power of Voices – from power shifting to power sharing .....	35
4.2 #NoMoreRhetoric: Moving from inertia to action against SGBV – Interfaith strategies to end SGBV .....	39
4.3 Consultations on women’s rights in Christianity – sharing and learning.....	41
4.4 Lessons and experiences from a faith-based gender assessment approach.....	44
4.5 Enhancing cross-movement collaboration between faith-based women’s rights movements .....	47
4.6 The road to gender justice: The story of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land .....	49

4.7 Women’s rights and Islam: Teachings vs. realities .....	51
4.8 Orange the world: End violence against women now! .....	55
5.0 Enhancing Freedom of Religion and Belief to enhance Peaceful Coexistence .....	59
5.1 Interfaith dialogues as a tool of peacebuilding from below.....	59
5.2 Promoting and sustaining interfaith relations: the faith community experience in Indonesia .....	61
5.3 The role of intra-faith and interfaith approaches in bridging the intergenerational gap.....	63
5.4 Edutainment as a tool of interfaith peace.....	65
5.5 Welcoming the stranger: the role of the faith community and its leaders in promoting peace and inclusive societies. ....	66
5.6 Freedom of religion and belief: experiences from women of faith in Africa .....	69
5.7 Alternative theological narratives that support pluralism, understanding, tolerance and respect to counter radicalization and violent extremism.....	73
6.0 Other sessions .....	79
6.1 Faith to Action Network Strategic Plan .....	79
6.2 Faith engagement in policy and decision-making spaces with regional economic communities, African Union and other agencies: experiences, challenges and opportunities .....	81
6.3 Faith to Action Network hub system planning .....	84
6.4 Closing plenary: Diversity and Inclusion: From Rhetoric to Collective Faith Action .....	86
Annex: Photos .....	91
Annex: About the Conference Organizers .....	98
Annex: Speaker Biographies .....	101
Annex: Track Session Speaker Biographies.....	107
Annex: Facilitators Biographies .....	119
Annex: Convention Interfaith Statement .....	121

## Acronyms

ACHPRC	African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights
ACRL / RfP	African Council of Religious Leaders / Religions for Peace
ADS-MKE	Anglican Development Services – Mt. Kenya East
ARCSS	Revitalization Agreement on Resolution of Conflict for South Sudan
AU	African Union
AYSRRH	Adolescent and Youth SRHR
C4RH	Catholics for Reproductive Health
CAPA	Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa
CAPaD	Christian Agency for Peace and Development
CCIH	Christian Connections for International Health
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHAK	Christian Health Association of Kenya
CHV	Community Health Volunteers
CHW	Community Health Worker
CPD	Conference on Population and Development
CRID	Communities Richer in Diversity
CRSD	Cadre des Religieux pour la Sante et le Developpement
DESIP	Delivering Equitable and Sustainable Increases in Family Planning
EAC	East African Commission
EAK	Evangelical Alliance of Kenya
ECOWAS	Economic organization for West African States
EIFDDA	Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action
ELCJHL	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
ELCSA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
F2A	Faith to Action
FBO	Faith based organization
FECCLAHA	Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa
FEMWISE	Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation
FGD	Focus group discussion(s)
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FP	Family planning
FL	Faith leader
FORB, FoRB	Freedom of Religion and/or Belief
SGBV	Sexual and gender based violence
GBV	Gender based violence
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDP	Internally Displaced People/Persons
IEC	Information-Education-Communication
IGAD	the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

IICPSR	Al Azhar University International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research
IMC	Ibrahimia Media Centre
IP	Intergenerational Partnerships
IRCK	Inter-religious Council of Kenya
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
JISRA	Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action
KIIs	Key informant interviews
KMYA	Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance
LWF	The Lutheran World Federation
OAIC	Organization of African Instituted Churches
MCJL	Muslim Centre for Justice and Law
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFCS	Muslim Family Counseling Services
MM	Mensen met een Missie
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
PE	Peer educators
PwD	People with a disability
RECSA	Regional Centre for Small Arms
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and gender based violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SUPKEM	Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims
TOT	Training of trainers
UJCC	Uganda Joint Christian Council
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Reviews
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WGDD	African Union Women, Gender and Development Directorate
WORLD YWCA	World Young Women's Christian Association
WUFBON	Western Uganda FBO Network
YW4A	Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy and Accountability project



*Group discussion ongoing as participants give their views on the importance of interfaith advocacy and dialogues*

## 1.0 Background

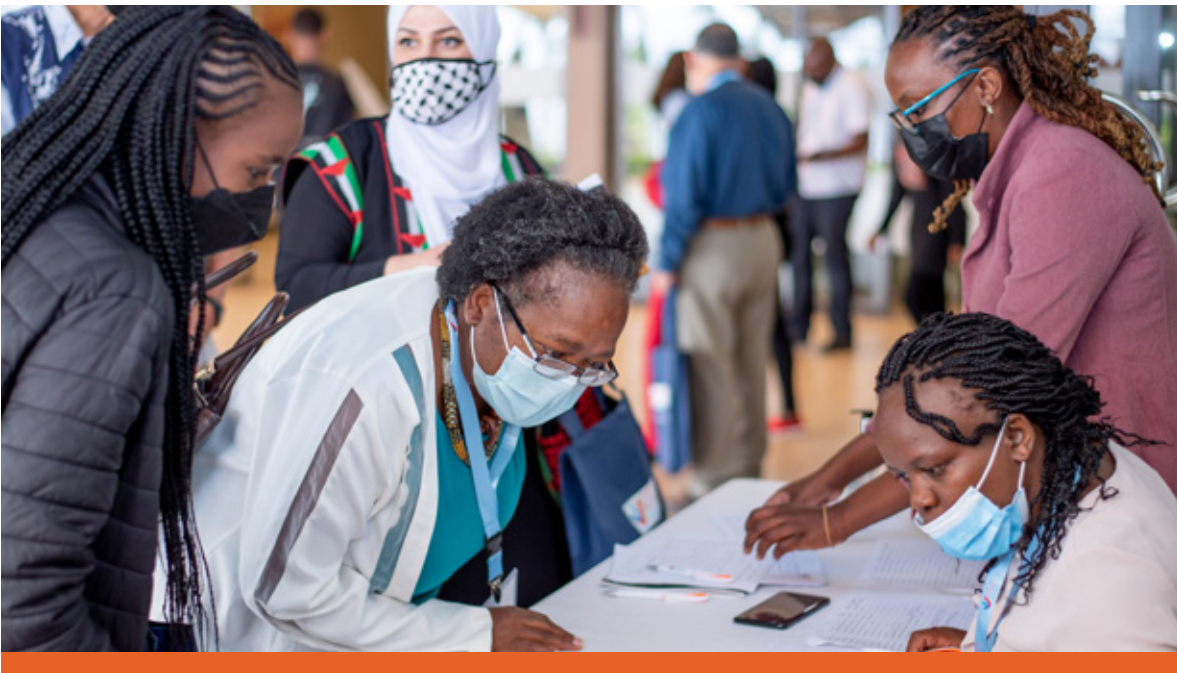
Every year, Faith to Action Network member organizations, partners, friends and allies gather to deliberate and reach consensus on issues they are grappling with. In 2019-2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the Network from holding more than one convention that offered a safe space for intra- and inter-faith dialogues so as to encourage mutual learning and exchange. In 2021, the Network re-started its tradition by convening an annual convention themed “Diversity and Inclusion: From Rhetoric to Collective Faith Action.”

### 1.1 About Faith To Action Network

Faith to Action Network is an interfaith network of faith organizations from Bahai, Buddhist,

Confucian, Hindu, Christian and Muslim organizations. It offers faith organizations a platform to engage on issues they are grappling with, in particular, women’s rights and gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, pluralism and peaceful coexistence.

Network members’ faith traditions call on us to uphold human dignity, human wellbeing and social and gender justice. Sometimes, our diverse faith teachings lack answers to the everyday challenges faced by communities. However, we all have a mutual interest in finding solutions to shared problems and articulating a compassionate voice. The Network looks for opportunities to engage in brave debates, mutual learning, increased collaboration,



*Participants register on-site*

while partnering constructively with other faith organizations, governments and other stakeholders. We are convinced that when we all join hands, we can exert powerful influence on leaders and communities for better health, gender justice and peaceful coexistence. Faith to Action Network brings together diverse faith actors and faith institutions – clergy, lay, youth, women and men - to engage in dialogues that addresses the day-to-day issues of all communities in safe spaces.



*Peter Munene, F2A Network CEO, welcomes participants to the Convention*

## 1.2 Conference Objectives

The 2021 Convention aimed to stimulate participants to better understand, engage and plan action on:

- Freedom of Religion and Belief in order to advance peaceful coexistence and pluralism.
- Gender just laws, policies, norms, and practices.
- Improved Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
- Building a faith actors' movement

The conference sought to ensure that participants:

- Shared experiences and learnt from each other, having discussed new ideas and perspectives
- Expressed solidarity for participants' challenging situations, celebrated each other's successes and achievements
- Inspired each other to plan, take and coordinate regional and global faith-based actions
- Find an opportunity to network and form strategic partnerships with other like-minded faith institutions and key stakeholders.

## 1.3 Conference organizers

The Faith to Action Network had many valued collaborators that helped organize the conference:

- Act Church of Sweden
- ACT Ubumbano



- African Council of Religious Leaders / Religions for Peace
- Al Azar University
- Cordaid
- Catholics for Reproductive Health (C4RH)
- Cadre des Religieux pour la Sante et le Developpement (CRSD)
- Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA)
- Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)
- Ibrahimia Media Centre (IMC)
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Inter-religious Council of Kenya (IRCK)
- Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance (KMYA)
- The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
- Mensen met een Missie (MM)
- Muhammadiyah
- Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL)
- Muslim Family Counseling Services (MFCS)
- World YWCA

The Faith to Action Network owes a debt of gratitude to its partners who gave generously of their time to help bring this conference together. Details about each of these contributing organizations can be found in Annex.

## 1.4 Participants

The 2021 Faith to Action Network Convention brought together faith and secular actors and participants from 56 faith organizations from 26 countries. They included representatives from Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu and Muslim organizations from East Africa, Northern Europe, Southern Africa, West Africa, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Southeast Asia.

## 1.5 Structure and methodology

The convention's three days included panel discussions, interactive break-out sessions and plenary discussions. Breakout sessions had three tracks:

- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- Women's Rights and Gender Justice
- Enhancing Freedom of Religion and Belief to enhance Peaceful Coexistence

During these convention sessions, a drafting committee comprised of a subset of conference participants, prepared an Interfaith Statement on human dignity, diversity and inclusion. The text of this Interfaith Statement was discussed at length in a plenary session and approved in the form found in Annex.



**Our faith traditions call on us to uphold human dignity, human welfare and social and gender justice.**

**Surat 17 verse 70**

"And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference"

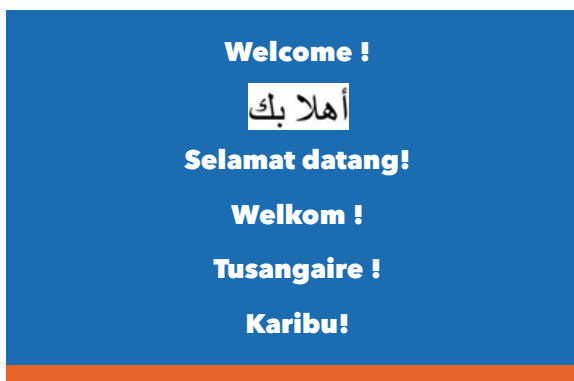
**Genesis 1:27**

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."



*Rev. Canon Grace Kaiso, Faith to Action Network, Chairman welcoming the delegates*

## 2.0 Opening plenary



The opening plenary welcomed participants and introduced them to Faith to Action Network. Introducing the convention theme “Diversity and Inclusion: From Rhetoric to Collective Faith Action,” aims and objectives.

Faith to Action Network mobilizes faith organizations’ support for family health and wellbeing. Faith to Action Network focuses on issues faith groups are grappling with, notably sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); women’s rights, gender justice and peaceful coexistence.

2021 represents the Faith to Action Network’s ten year anniversary. Building on a range of consultations, representatives from 250 faith organizations in 2011 concluded that they needed a global platform to engage in contested areas. Instead of ignoring or closing their eyes on the topics they felt uncomfortable with, they wanted to confront them through brave debates, mutual learning and increased collaboration, while partnering constructively with governments and other stakeholders. This platform needed to be owned and managed

by the faith community on its terms, to set its agenda, define its processes and language.

Six institutions were mandated to found the Faith to Action Network:

- the African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace (ACRL-RfP)
- Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid)
- Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH)
- Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA)
- International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research
- Al Azhar University (IICPSR)
- Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah

In joining the network, members committed to leveraging their institutions and networks to provide services and education and to influence government and donor policies and funding. The founding principles emphasized respect of each other’s diverse faiths and needs while emphasizing the importance of human rights and social justice. Membership was motivated by a shared conviction that change was possible across religious boundaries, and more importantly, that members could make it happen.

Over the years, Faith to Action Network has evolved into a global interfaith network of more than 110 Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian,

Hindu and Muslim faith organizations in 27 countries on four continents. It has also refined its mission to mobilize faith organizations' support for family health and wellbeing. Its current strategic focus is on issues that faith actors are grappling with, including sexual and reproductive health and family planning; gender equality and women's rights; peaceful coexistence. Its strategies are to engage in policymaking processes, strengthen faith organizations' capacity to contribute to development processes, communicate development and human rights content, promote interfaith experience sharing, learning and exchanges, undertake research and demonstration projects and offer small grants for interfaith work.

Since its foundation, 10 years ago, Faith to Action Network has had a large impact:

- Collectively, Faith to Action Network contributed to 94 policy and legal changes between 2017 and 2018, such as the Consultations on the African Union Gender strategy, work with the KAYA elders in Kenya, the East African Legislative Assembly SRHR bill, work with the Apostolic community in Zimbabwe, of advocating for funding for Ghana AIDS Commission.
- The network has contributed to institutional changes within 100 faith organizations between 2017 and 2021, for example through the SADC Interfaith Consultations, the Pan-African Keep Girls in School Conference, the Learning Caravan Sud Kivu, and the Faith pre-conferences at ICFP.
- Faith to Action Network is an effective platform for inter- and intra-faith dialogue. An independent evaluation (Veldkamp et al, 2016) testifies that "F2A Network is a strong forum and effective platform for dialogue and advocacy". The study emphasizes that offering "space for expression as well as transparent dialogue on divergent views has

led to common engagement." Safe space is an especially significant requirement, allowing people to get to know one another and to engage privately, as opposed to holding discussions in the full glare of publicity.

- Faith to Action Network has implemented interfaith demonstration projects to showcase the relevance of interfaith action. For example, in Kenya, Faith to Action Network members have jointly implemented the DESIP program. 119 faith-based health facilities have offered family planning services to 132,550 women in 2 years (2019 and 2020). In Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania, Faith to Action Network members have implemented the Communities Richer in Diversity (CRID) project. They have improved interfaith understanding and peaceful coexistence among 17,580 youth through direct interventions and 1,054,123 people through new and traditional media.



*Dr. Douglas Huber, Christian Connection for International Health, and founding member of Faith to Action Network, addressing the participants during the opening plenary*

- Faith to Action Network has communicated difficult issues. Our communication has promoted communication guided by respect and sensitivity that offers alternative terminology, adapted to different cultural and religious contexts, to increase faith organizations' acceptance of informed content. Examples include the Interfaith declaration Sud Kivu, 3 interfaith briefs on SRHR, teenage pregnancies and gender-based violence published in English, isiShona, isiNdebele, chiChewa and Portuguese, consultations on Women's rights, call-in shows in local FM-stations, and use of social media including the "Straight Talk on Family Planning and Religion at ICFP 2018".
- Faith to Action Network has generated evidence and developed faith-based methodologies, with 12 research studies, more than 25 documented case studies, and nine faith-based methodologies, translated in numerous languages.

Participating F2A Network Steering Council and European Board members were invited to speak. Each expressed their admiration and appreciation for the Network's great achievements over these past years: Rev. Canon Kaiso, Prof Dr. Ahmed Ragab, Dr. Douglas Huber, Dr. Christina de Vries, Mr. Peter K. Munene and Ms Karen Hoehn.



*Steering Council and European Board members express admiration and appreciation for the Network's achievements*

## 3.0 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Seven convention sessions focused on different aspects of how faith actors are collaborating to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### 3.1 No Longer Silent: Southern Africa Faith Leaders Support Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights for All

In this session, participants shared practical experiences from faith-based organizations in Southern Africa on congregational advocacy on SRHR, gender-based violence (GBV) and teenage pregnancy.



Bongikosi Moyo- Bango - Methodist Church of Southern Africa

**Bongikosi Moyo-Bango**, Methodist Church of Southern Africa, explained how in 2019-20, ACT Ubumbano in collaboration with Faith to Action Network invited faith organizations to discuss and develop interfaith briefs on gender-based violence, SRHR and teenage pregnancy. Over several days, representatives from Baha’i, Muslim, Christian and traditional faith organizations from six Southern African countries engaged in dialogues.

Faith organizations in the Southern Africa region have tremendous influence. Many people are religious and religion is very important in their life, so the teachings of faith organizations influence people’s choices and behaviors. Unfortunately, GBV in the region is very high, and contributes to with high rates of teenage pregnancies, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. South Africa President HE Cyril Ramaphosa referred to teenage pregnancies as the second pandemic. Unfortunately, faith organizations have nurtured the silence of secrecy and swept these issues under the carpet. Many topics are considered taboo and ungodly.

*“We can no longer be silent, as we are called to uphold human dignity for all creation.”*

-- Interfaith dialogue participants from six countries in Southern Africa

The dialogues enabled participants to see how as religious people they are called to stand with everyone, including the marginalized and the poor. “I am my sister’s keeper, you are your brother’s keeper”. They developed interfaith briefs on GBV, teenage pregnancies and SRHR. Since then, the briefs have been used as a starting point for advocacy, dialogues and awareness creation within faith organizations. Speakers outlined the following next steps:

- We need to work on language, and careful not to be misunderstood
- Using multi-pronged approaches with different communication channels and methodologies helps improve outreach
- As a religious community, we have a voice – we can no longer be silent. We need to act to bring about change, and the time to act is now.



*Archbishop Mnisi, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa, sharing practical learnings on advocacy efforts in South Africa on SRHR, SGBV and Teenage Pregnancies*

After participating in the dialogues, **Presiding Bishop Absalom Mnisi, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa** returned to his congregations and community to introduce the issues to the pastors and women and youth leaders. He advocated broadly, looking critically at leadership, balancing women and men representation in committees. He worked at all levels, from schools to leadership. For example, from childhood there are catechism classes for children – boys and girls – into which messages were added, stating that “there’s nobody superior to the other”.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa has taken the following actions:

- Trained volunteers to raise awareness – clergy and lay members
- Raised awareness in communities including on domestic violence, abuse of children and abuse of elderly
- Provided age-appropriate teachings in Sunday school for adults
- Added topics to confirmation classes, e.g., for youth to identify what they want the elders to know about their life choices, i.e., “Ask the youth in the class to teach the adults”
- Organized group discussions with youth – girls and boys – to discuss GBV
- Trained faith leaders on trauma counselling to help survivors and refer them for services
- Engaged in scriptural analysis and teachings: what does the Bible say about GBV?

ELCSA sees that GBV is a very sensitive issue: it is not only a family issue, but it also happens in the church. Therefore, ELCSA is sensitizing the people in the church. As a result of ELCSA’s efforts, many churches in ELCSA area have

women priests, and a first female Bishop was consecrated in 2021.

*“The soul doesn’t have a gender.”*

-- Abdia Naidoo, Baha’I Community  
in Southern Africa



Abdia Naidoo

**Abdia Naidoo, Baha’i Community in Southern Africa**, explained that her journey started with gaining personal knowledge and information from interfaith dialogues. Thereafter, she engaged in consultations within the Baha’I community on how to integrate the topics of SRHR, GBV and teenage-pregnancy into their youth programming. She also appreciated the networking with colleagues from other countries. What happens at global level and local level is connected, and faith organizations are not alone in what they do.

**Rev. Agustao Zitha**, explained that after the interfaith dialogues, the Council of Churches in Mozambique engaged diverse faith organizations to understand that “talking about sex” is not a taboo. It is important to understand and inform about sexuality and related issues to prevent GBV and to prevent teenage pregnancies.

*“The church is not an island, there’s a need to engage in issues societies are facing.”*

-- Rev. Agustao Zitha, Council of Churches,  
Mozambique

The Council of Churches in Mozambique has taken the following actions:

- Formed three groups – women’s leaders, men’s leaders and youth leaders – to read the interfaith policy papers during dialogues
- Encouraged faith leaders to speak from the pulpit, in places of worship



- Advocated for non-discrimination of any group.

Mozambique has a patriarchal culture, but change has begun: church committees have started to include women; the leader of parliament is a woman; there are a few women Bishop and Priests. However, because of the dominant culture, despite these efforts, women might not raise their voices in their communities and churches.



*Rev Agustao Zitha*

**Matthews Msiska** explained that ACT Alliance Malawi is the main organization to coordinate the interfaith community in Malawi; it contributed to the formulation of interfaith briefs. Secular language and policies are not understood by the faith community, which uses different reference frameworks, and technocratic language. It was very important to participate in crafting the terminology and

language, by referring to faith scriptures and sources, to help the faith community better understand and embrace them. In addition, many materials exist in English only, which is not fully understood by everybody. Act Alliance translated the briefs into the Chewa language, the main language of Malawi.



*Matthews Msiska*

ACT Alliance Malawi has taken the following actions:

- Presbyterian Church, Blantyre Synod evaluated SRH policy gaps and developed its own SRHR policy
- The interfaith briefs informed the annual plans of 2019, 2020 and 2021: all members' annual plans included strong components of SRHR, GBV and teenage pregnancy
- Members organized regular awareness raising campaigns, e.g., during the global call "16 days of activism against GBV".
- Topics in the interfaith briefs were into faith organizations' programs.

In the Southern Africa region, the dialogues and interfaith briefs have triggered conversations and internal advocacy processes. The aim is to get faith groups to take action. Discrimination in schools is a common problem in Malawi. When a girl is pregnant, only the girl children are discriminated and not the boys. There needs to be more help, as there are no shelters for pregnant girls.

The dialogues have revealed big challenges across the world, but challenges vary from one place to another. Strategies must be adapted to the local context, while not watering down the messages. ACT Malawi needs more comprehensive materials; the briefs provide a starting point for developing further messages and documents.

### 3.2 Adolescent SRHR and the role of FBOs: Lessons from West Africa

This session aimed to enhance knowledge and understanding on ASRHR using faith based approach; explain the ASRHR situation in West Africa using Ghana and Senegal as learning

points; report on approaches used by F2A members in west Africa to address ASRHR; and discuss how faith actors can champion and advocate for ASRHR going forward.

**Top take-away:** Religions are needed to help strengthen knowledge and advocacy for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and family planning (FP) and against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Faith leaders' work to draw upon religious scripture to clarify and support SRH and FP and spearheaded such advocacy is beginning to be felt globally.

**Sheikh Mbacke**, Cadre des Religieux pour la Sante et le Developpement (CRSD), explained that nearly 42% of Senegal's population is under



*Sheikh Mbacke, Cadre des Religieux pour la Sante et le Developpement (CRSD)*

the age of 15. According to data of the national agency for statistics and demographics (ANSD), 31.19% of the population was 10-24 years old and 22.14% was 10-19 years old (out of a total population of 16,705,608) in 2020. Adolescence is a period of great opportunity and increased risk. Adolescents are a heterogeneous group. Their needs and behavior are influenced by gender, developmental stage, socio-economic status and social and cultural environment. Youth are however faced with a lots of challenges which include, child marriage, drug abuse, sexual abuse, child labor, child trafficking, HIV and STIs. They are confronted with early and/or unprotected sexual intercourse, which frequently leads to complicated pregnancies. Complications during childbirth among adolescents aged 15 to 19 years are the second leading cause of mortality in Senegal. In addition, half of mental health disorders detected in adults appear before the age of 14.

Senegalese youth are faced with misinformation, misconceptions and much more. They are influenced by the explosion of social networks. Also, adults have misinformation about the youth and do not understand them. This situation impacts the short and long term health of young people and their future. If youth are well prepared with good health and education, there will be a healthy population in the society. There is need for resource mobilization to provide more and more readily accepted SRH information and services to adolescents and youths.

**Mohamed Bun Bida**, Muslim Family Counselling Services (MFCS) explained that according to the 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDS, 2014), the country has a very young population with 14% and 13% in the 5-9 and 10-14 age groups, respectively. Adolescents

aged 10-19 and young adults aged 20-24 together constitute 29.3% of Ghana's population (21.9% and 7.4%, respectively) and face peculiar challenges related to sexual and reproductive health, HIV and STIs, nutrition, mental health, substance use, non-communicable diseases, intentional and unintentional injuries, various forms of violence, inequities and risks and



*Mohamed Bun Bida, Muslim Family Counselling Services*

vulnerabilities linked with child marriage, child labor, trafficking and disabilities. Street children constitute a significant percentage of young population.

In Ghana, one in every five women aged 20-24 years were first married before age 18 years. This remains lower at one in every 20 women of the same age group married for the first time before age 15 years. One in every ten of adolescent girls and young women aged 15-24 years began having sex before their 15th birthday. One in every 20 women for the same age group, married for the first time before age 15 years. Child Marriages and SGBV are high in the following regions of the country: Northern 28%, Upper East 28%, Volta 24% Western 23%, Central, 22% , Upper West 22% and Eastern 23%, with a national prevalence of 19%. The drivers are complex, including adolescent pregnancy, lack of SRHR knowledge, tradition and poverty.

According to Bun Bida, the Quran addresses sexual and reproductive health (Quran 2:2:5). Religion is about advice, communication and teaching and applicable across generations. Society should adapt to changing times and seek to apply scriptural teachings to the current world. For instance, the Muslim faithful used to walk all the way to Mecca. Today, people fly to Mecca using airplanes.

If the potential for youth is harnessed in Africa, the continent can achieve a lot. This group needs to be empowered with correct information, to marry culture and faith to see how matters of SRH can be addressed. For instance, child marriage comes more from culture than from religion. Faith actors can use the scripture to sensitize cultural leaders and elders on doing away with retrogressive practices.

Bun Bida shared his experience as a Community Based Distributor of reproductive health supplies, including condoms, some years back. When he started the work in the 1990s, the community saw it as new and strange. His work on SRH and family planning has helped community members discuss these issues openly. Teaching can include use of supportive religious scriptures as well as contemporary evidence to address SRHR, family planning and HIV/AIDS. What matters most is the manner in which the message is delivered, since religion is a quite sensitive to terminology used.

### 3.3 Strategizing for a constructive faith voice in global advocacy spaces

In a session designed to stimulate learning and strategizing for faith advocacy engagement on SRHR, Emilie Weiderud and Peter Svensson, ACT Church of Sweden, explained that globally, there's a strong and comprehensive normative and institutional framework on sexual and reproductive health and rights. SRHR are defined in normative frameworks such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Beijing conference, and Agenda 2030 within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 3, 4 and 5. What is decided at the global level matters, both for the regional follow ups of these processes as well as how it trickles down and impacts policies and practices on the ground.

Globally, and closer to home, these issues are often contested on the basis of religion and faith. However, reality is more complex. Faith actors engage on these issues in ways that work for their contexts. This calls for a more nuanced engagement as well as deeper understanding of the needs of the communities that faith actors serve. How do faith actors on the ground best

engage, translate and link what happens at the global level, to the regional and national level?

There are numerous examples of faith-based engagement with global advocacy. Act Church of Sweden has partnered with Faith to Action Network at the ICPD for a number of years. In 2019, they, alongside ACT Alliance and All Africa Conference of Churches made a statement at CPD in New York. This statement was in full support of the ICPD Program of Action, and explicitly spelled out faith support for SRHR. It calls on reducing polarization and increasing collaboration.<sup>1</sup> Together, this partnership has led to a lot of learning regarding how to build capacity and visibility over time with inter-faith and ecumenical support for faith actors' role in SRHR work. This has helped to break down barriers and preconceived ideas of the role of religion in general, as well as for these issues in particular. Other benefits have been improved relations with government, multilaterals, donors as well as other civil society as well as making the connection to national and regional policy processes. By building on these experiences, the faith presence within global SRHR advocacy spaces can be accelerated.

Points to consider while planning and conducting for advocacy:

- What do we want to change and why? What are the boundaries?
- Who are the allies? Who are the barriers?
- Stakeholder analysis – To whom will you direct the change? For whom?
- Advocacy at different levels – Communities and Policy spaces.

- Working together – In advocacy, never work alone but be at the forefront and inspire others.

SRHR global commitments and processes that can provide helpful background and information include ICPD; the 1995 Beijing Declaration followed every year by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – 3, 4 & 5; the UN Human Rights Council; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

For the last six years, ACT Church of Sweden has held a presence at the annual Commission on Population and Development together with ACT Alliance and F2A Network. At the Nairobi ICPD +25 summit in 2019, many commitments were made by faith actors.



*Emilie Weiderud and Peter Svensson, ACT Church of Sweden facilitating a session*

<sup>1</sup>Statement at CPD 2019, text [here](#), video [here](#)

Attending an international or United Nations convention is not advocacy. Advocacy is making statements, building the capacity of partners, building relations, linkages to national and regional policy processes. It is ongoing, not a one-time activity.

At the local level, faith actors and faith leaders contribute to the ICPD Program of Action on a daily basis. They help monitor how ICPD being implemented by governments and how regional processes are progressing in between the annual international conferences. Some are involved in monitoring the implementation of human rights using the processes of the UN Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR).

Some important regional decision-making bodies include: the African Union (AU), African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), the East African Commission (EAC), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and Economic organization for West African States (ECOWAS).

Session break-out group's participants addressed the following topics.

### Best practices of how to integrate SRHR in other processes

1. Integrate into Gender
2. Work in Networks e.g., Faith to Action Network to synergize on strengths of partners
3. Use of education and entertainment. Utilization of youth as ambassadors e.g., young radio journalists.
4. Contextualize SRHR for different groups, regions, and sectors
5. Integration of SRHR with Social Protection

6. Engage legal advice for existing policies and laws for SRHR integration

### Bad practices for partnering in advocacy

1. Little or no community dialogue and buy in
2. Advancing hidden individual agenda – Misusing partners
3. Imposing tasks on the community – not considering social norms
4. Superimposing previous strategies onto new issues
5. Lack of trust
6. Unfocused agenda
7. Lack of groundwork e.g. stakeholders mapping
8. Treating advocacy as an even and not process. Lack of continuity/ review processes/ sustainability.
9. Failure to communicate back
10. Lack of visibility and publicity



Zena Hassan. Program Officer, Search for Common Ground

### Good practices for how to advocate at local and national level

1. Be clear on goals
2. Focus on how to reach the goals
3. Document and evaluate
4. Train advocates (and stakeholders)
5. Know the community's needs and backgrounds
6. Choose your tools wisely and adapt your language
7. Meet people where they are.
8. Know your audience and adapt your message to the audience
9. Cultivate champions

### Best practices for how to advocate in a global negotiation – before, during and after

#### Before:

1. Select good/ right partners who can make a change
2. Ensure equitable/ correct level of representation
3. Identify key issues/ priorities list cutting across populations and development
4. Stakeholder mapping and aligning accordingly
5. Identify barriers and mitigation strategies
6. Resource mobilization strategies
7. Drawing workplans, organizing and coordinating.

#### During:

1. Assign keynote speakers – Advocates
2. Framing and packaging of key messages and disseminating through different media channels – mainstream media
3. Lobbying with relevant partners especially the distractors
4. Awareness training and sensitization of behavior change communication.

#### After:

1. Target the negotiation
2. Collaborate with media which is a strong advocacy channel
3. Do follow-up and monitoring.
4. Reporting and sharing of learning experiences
5. Evaluate and re-plan

Keeping these practices in mind can help strengthen the effectiveness and impact of global advocacy.

### 3.4 Faith-based approaches towards youth sexuality in fragile African countries: parents advancing SRHR for youth

This session aimed to give religious leaders skills and tools in hand to support parents in age-specific life skills education for children and youth. It sought to share the good practices of the training carried out with religious leaders and parents with the module “Dad, mom where do babies come from?” specifically as well as

the various other Young S3 documents used with parents and young people. It stimulated participants to change their perception, confidence and capacity of parent training on CVC education, creating a supportive environment based on the local realities of parents and youth.

**Top take-away:** To become more involved in the promotion of the sexual health and rights of adolescents and young people, religious leaders must understand the needs and realities of young people; the role of family dynamics; and good practices in services for sexual and reproductive health. They need the knowledge and skills to better control and understand affective and relational education within the family. Clear communication between religious leaders, parents, children and young people with key messages for each type is essential.



Immaculée Mulamba - Cordaid, Sud-Kivu office DRC, leading a session on faith-based approaches towards youth sexuality in fragile African countries

**Immaculée Mulamba** of the Cordaid Sud-Kivu Office, Democratic Republic of Congo, explained that the Jeune S3 project was a sexual and reproductive health project for adolescents and young people implemented by Cordaid in the Democratic Republic of Congo. To build the capacity of religious leaders, Jeune S3 provided tools and training sessions. The tools included a training guide for religious leaders; and a parent training manual with picture boxes. The training guide for religious leaders addresses the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people; roles of religious leaders; gender; safe motherhood; how to guide young people; and community mobilization. The parent training manual complements the training of religious leaders in the form of manuals and picture boxes. The salient point discussed in this manual relates to the importance of communication. The behavior of some parents often constitutes obstacles to communication between religious leaders/parents and children/young people. Key messages address four parent archetypes: the police parent, moralizing parent, critical parent, cynical parent.

Participants were provided with relevant facts, theological arguments and examples, such as the following scriptural texts:

#### The Bible:

*“Train a child in the way he should follow, and when he is old he will not turn away from it (Proverbs 22:6)”*

*“Fathers do not irritate your children lest they become discouraged (Colossians 3:21)”*



### The Quran:

*“My lord grant me a pious child. » The Holy Quran (sura 37, verse 100); “The pious child is an odor among the odors of Paradise. »*

*The Noble Prophet*

### The Quran:

*“Respect your children and teach them good manners. » The Noble Prophet*

*“Be the best at your speeches so that they (the children) hear the best answers. »*

*Imam Ali رضي الله عنه*

*“The Noble Prophet (as) greeted children and adults. » Imam Ali رضي الله عنه*

Using a workshop approach, this session explained the role of religious leaders, teachers and parents in developing the approach and in implementing life skills education. It trained participants by organizing small group work with small assignments from the method to apply, including role play. It demonstrated how to bring fun and real connection between adults and children on sensitive issues, including through using an SRHR card game. A video from JeuneS3 on youth rights was discussed.

### 3.5 Sud Kivu’s experience: an interfaith caravan to promote family health and well-being

This session sought to contribute to the growing knowledge base for effectively carrying out interfaith advocacy for family health and well-being, by drawing on the Sud Kivu experience.

It aimed to educate regarding the interfaith Caravan’s key components, including where and how the methodology is relevant; exchange experiences amongst advocates who advocate for faith organizations’ acceptance of family health and wellbeing; and develop a set of key recommendations in conducting interfaith advocacy for family health and wellbeing in a fragile context.

**Top take-away:** Religion has an important role in promoting reproductive health and family planning in Sud Kivu, because religious beliefs influence people’s choices, because faith actors provide a large share of health services, and because policy makers are influenced by religious considerations. Therefore, Cordaid, Al-Azhar University and Faith to Action Network have implemented a series of advocacy actions in 2019 and 2020 that have resulted in numerous outcomes.

Five faith organizations – Al-Azhar University, Cordaid, Faith to Action Network, Archdiocese of Bukavu, and COMICO – in Sud Kivu, DR Congo have publicly announced their commitment for family health and wellbeing. They have developed and implemented action plans to put in practice this commitment. This has resulted in institutional shifts in support of family planning. Changes include the integration of FP messages into routine catechism, pastoral work, women, youth and fathers’ programmes, routine pre-marital counselling. The faith organizations have established an interfaith platform on family planning in South Kivu. By now, the institutions meet every three months to identify challenges, progresses, and plan together.

The session provided insight into the Archdiocese of Sud Kivu’s advocacy work. The Caravan brought together faith institutions and unified the approach of faith institutions.

There is no differences between Protestants, Muslims and Catholics any longer. In Catholic parishes, our shepherds have integrated family planning into pastoral care. FP is integrated into prematernal counselling. The Archdiocese manages many schools and has been asked to speak with the teachers about family planning. The different faith organizations support each other in this area. Sometime a specific expertise is missing within a faith organization, but it is available in other faith organizations. In such a case, the Archdiocese asks for support from another faith organization.

Next steps: The advocacy process needs to be upscaled in all places of worship. There are many faith leaders that need to be reached. While the senior leaders have announced their support for family planning, faith leaders need to be trained on family planning.

**Dr. Seydou Niday**, Cordaid, gave an overview of an interfaith advocacy campaign in support of family planning implemented in Sud Kivu. The objective was to gain all faith groups' commitment to expanding access to family planning services and information in South Kivu.

**The context in Sud Kivu:** 82 percent of Congolese describe religion as “very important” in their lives ([Pew, 2010](#)). In Sud Kivu, faith actors have considerable influence on : people’s individual FP choices: for example, age at marriage, family structure and roles and preventive health practices like strategies couples use to achieve their preferred family size; Faith actors manage 35 to 40 % of all health zones and 40 to 50 % of all health facilities (World Bank, 2012 and 2013 ) and this means their health facilities play a key role



*Participants keenly listening to an ongoing session*

in ensuring the availability of FP services. The political commitment for a strong FP program is strongly influenced by factors such as prevailing cultural and religious attitudes.

Yet, many local faith leaders perceive FP as sensitive topics ([Mbadu et al, 2017](#)). The causes are: inadequate medical terminology, many misperceptions and misinformation on family planning, and wrong interpretation of scriptures and sources.

In Sud-Kivu, faith actors demonstrate their interest for family planning. Nearly all its health zones have a family planning program (94%, compared to national average of 46% (PF-PSN, 2014)); 43.6% of all health workers have been trained in family planning (compared to a national average of 27.8% (PTME UNICEF cited in PF-PSN, 2014)); Sud Kivu is the province with the highest percentage of health facilities offering FP services (81%, compared to a national average of 33%).

Cordaid, Al-Azhar and Faith to Action Network put in place 5 interfaith advocacy strategies:

1. Developed an interfaith training guide to explain family planning from a faith perspective
2. Cordaid has advocated towards faith actors in Sud Kivu to negotiate a commitment statement on family planning. This statement includes measurable and feasible actions.
3. Organized a learning Caravan in November 2019: for a week, faith leaders have organized trainings, dialogues, preaching and prayers in support of family planning.
4. Faith actors have been encouraged to put in practice their commitments, with the technical and financial support of Faith to Action Network and Cordaid.

The advocacy strategy was guided by the following principles:

- We offer a safe space for interfaith dialogues. Discussions are non-judgmental, compassionate, solidary.
- Discussions are guided by respect and sensitivity for diverse beliefs and values.
- They go beyond theoretical theological debates and engage participants in pragmatic problem-solving.
- Without shying away from controversial topics, it draws on faith scriptures and teachings, medical knowledge and socio-economic insights.
- We encourage faith actors to raise frank questions and engage in brave debates.
- Participants are exposed to new interfaith and intercultural experiences.

This advocacy resulted in the following outcomes:

- Five faith organizations have publicly announced their commitment for family health and wellbeing in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Five senior leaders have signed, published and broadly disseminated an interfaith declaration with very supportive language on family planning and reproductive health. All major faith organizations have rallied around this text, and cultural institutions have expressed their motivation to become signatories, too. All have developed action plans to put in practice this commitment. To date, the declaration has been disseminated to 5,491 people directly and 16.4 million indirectly.
- Five faith organizations in Sud Kivu have achieved institutional shifts in support of family planning. Changes include the integration of family planning messages into routine catechism, pastoral work, women,

youth and fathers' programs and routine pre-marital counselling. All Catholic parishes and health units in South Kivu have received guidance from the archbishop to provide information on all contraceptive methods and refer clients where these methods are available. This is significant, as before the diocese was sharing information mainly about natural family planning methods.

- Five faith organizations have established an interfaith platform on family planning in South Kivu. Its purpose is to coordinate faith organizations' programs and activities on family planning, share lessons and challenges and organize joint activities. This sub-commission is part of the Permanent Multisectoral Technical Committee for Family Planning (CTMP) of Sud Kivu. The subcommittee is headed by the Protestant and Catholic churches while the Muslim community of Congo offers secretariat functions. Meetings are called and chaired by faith organizations.

This work is very relevant because the public statement clarifies faith actors' position on FP/RH. This reduces the uncertainty of health workers, teachers and other staff and enables them to promote access to services and comprehensive information on FP. The action plans make it possible to mobilize faith-based platforms to offer services and raise awareness among believers. Given the importance of religion, government, donors, and faith actors need to collaborate in order to increase contraceptive prevalence in the Congo.

The lessons include:

- A methodology combining theological, medical and socio-demographic perspectives that show a clear complementarity between them
- Individual contacts as a strategy of change

- A good selection of influential focal points and resource persons
- Intra-faith dialogues before discussing with other faith groups in plenary
- External expertise as a tool for change
- Positive space for dialogue to focus on what people have in common, not what divides them
- Recognition of the influence of faith organizations in FP that made them aware of their role in family planning
- Helpful support from political and health officials in the province
- Transparent and close collaboration between partners
- Recognition of the leadership and expertise of each organization



*Faith to Action Network Founding member, Prof. Ragab, addressing the participants*

**Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ragab**, Al-Azhar University, described the Learning Caravan, its history and development. The original idea for the Caravan was to respond to many misconceptions about family planning in faith communities. The strategy's success rests on eye-level partnerships with faith organizations, which need to own the topic and program.

The original Caravan included a travelling team of scholars including theologians, medical doctors, anthropologists. The first travelling seminar was in Aceh, Indonesia. Later on, many more were organized in Somalia, Gambia, Morocco, Yemen. In Kenya, the program shifted and got a new name "Caravan". Very high-level scholars travelled to Kenya, including a people with an Egyptian Minister. In Sud Kivu, the program shifted to become interreligious, with the collaboration of Cordaid.

We gained senior religious leaders buy-in. We came to learn from your experience, we want to learn from you, we want to hear your ideas on the program. As there's severe lack of knowledge, we developed a curriculum for religious leaders. The program addressed all topics from faith leaders' perspective.

**Séraphine Lugwarha**, Medical Bureau, Archdiocese of Bukavu, described the Caravan as bringing together faith institutions in a unified approach, eliminating difference among Protestants, Muslims and Catholics, whose meet every three months to identify challenges, progresses, and plan together. The different faith organizations support each other in this area. When a specific expertise is missing within a faith organization, it may be available and requested from other faith organizations. Faith leaders also have increased their visibility at provincial level by participating in the CTMP.

In the community, family planning has been integrated into pastoral care and pre marital counselling. Lugwarha has been asked to speak with teachers about family planning in many schools managed by the Catholic Archdiocese.

*"Faith leaders and faith organizations are not barriers. They are keenly interested in promoting human dignity."*

-- Séraphine Lugwarha, Medical Bureau, Archdiocese of Bukavu

Lugwarha indicated that the advocacy process needs to be upscaled in all places of worship. There are many faith leaders that need to be reached. While senior leaders have announced their support for family planning, faith leaders need to be trained on family planning. There's need to follow-up and monitor the action plans. The faith organizations would like to offer family planning services inside their pastoral care. The congregations trust their faith leaders, but not the medical staff. In addition, the Archdiocese would like to upscale the services in the 5 other provinces that it accompanies. There are chaplains for youth, women and men's organizations that need capacity building, which presents a huge opportunity. Faith leaders and faith organizations are very influential on communities and decision-makers. They are partners for the communities and for the government. Of course, faith leaders don't understand everything. They have a good education, but the curriculum doesn't cover all areas of life. It is important to respond to their

knowledge and skills gaps to help them achieve their mission. Importantly, faith leaders have a close contact with communities, and the trust of communities.

**Dr. Immaculée Mulamba Amisi**, Cordaid, reported that before 2019, there were serious challenges in the province. Many faith leaders were suspicious. Social workers were putting up sign boards on family planning, but they were put down over night. Trained faith leaders had started sensitizing about family planning, and were appointed elsewhere overnight.

But after the Caravan, each faith organization has understood that they are responsible to promote family health and wellbeing. In some areas, there's high malnutrition. This is related to very large families, within families with very little resources. Faith leaders had not understood the link between hunger, large families and family planning.

The Caravan has helped faith leaders to accept family planning. Information is now everywhere. The Caravan has also allowed to create a joint advocacy platform. They meet every three months. By now, there's a provincial budget line for FP, but the state does not allocate sufficient funds. Faith leaders are actively asking for the realization of the budgets. In some areas, faith leaders refused to provide family planning. But the family planning champions clarified the issue, pointing towards a high-level interfaith commitment. Faith leaders have visited each other's places of worship. It had never been seen before.

One faith organization dropped out of the process. Why? The reason is related to our advocacy strategy. It is important to understand that faith organizations have different structures. Some are very hierarchic, and others are more decentralized. However, Sud Kivu is a province. This means that for one centralized



*Delegates keenly listening and taking notes during the track sessions*

religious institution, the agreement taken at provincial level was not approved at central level. The lesson is: Need a good understanding of decision-making structures within faith organizations.

A second challenge was that faith institutions did not have sufficient funding to carry out the family planning advocacy plans. The idea was to reach the smaller congregational units. Cordaid and Faith to Action Network re-arranged their strategy to provide micro-grants. It is possible to work with religious leaders, provided good information is provided. It is just needed to take an attempt. The process has been documented and merits replication.

### 3.6 Faith actors and faith leaders increasing uptake of child spacing and family planning information and services in Kenya

This session aimed to share lessons learned from Kenyan faith leaders' and Faith Actors representatives' experiences in advocating for family planning as part of the DESIP program. Learning objectives included: increase understanding of Islamic perspectives on Child spacing and family planning; understand Christian perspectives on Family planning; and expand knowledge on faith-based advocacy approaches for child spacing and family planning at the community levels (demand creation) and in decision making spaces.

Faith to Action Network has been implementing the DESIP (Delivering Equitable and Sustainable Increases in Family Planning) Program through a consortium of faith-based partners namely: The Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), Anglican Development Services – Mt. Kenya East (ADS-MKE), Christian Health Association

of Kenya (CHAK) and Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC).

F2A's strategy to increase demand for child spacing and family planning information and services is driven by Faith leaders, Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) and Peer educators (PEs), and maximizes all existing faith platforms at the community level. As authoritative providers of information, faith leaders can motivate change within the community. They tackle retrogressive social and misunderstood religious norms, demystify myths and misconceptions, and address cultural barriers to FP. They integrate evidence-based and scripture-backed approaches and messages as they support the other demand creation strategies and agents. Through a combination of strategies, by the end of the second year of DESIP program implementation, Faith to Action Network had reached 165,994 women of reproductive age from hard-to-reach and marginalized communities including the disabled.

#### *Top take-aways from the session*

The speakers – Rev. Njihia of CHAK, Sheikh Bashir of SUPKEM, Ev. Catherine Wanja of ADSMKE, Mohamed of the DESIP SUPKEM program, Patrick Kibe of the DESIP ADSMKE program, and Guyo Dabaso of the DESIP ADSMKE program – were faith leaders and coordinators from the implementing faith-based organizations who have been actively involved in designing and delivering DESIP interventions. They shared the following successful strategies and lessons learned.

**Empowered Faith Leaders** - Over 140 Faith Leaders (FLs) have been trained and reach their congregations with scripture-backed messages and information. They collaborate with other trained demand creators who include

Community Health Volunteers (CHVs), peer educators, Traditional birth attendants and cultural leaders.

**Reaching the poor rural woman, adolescents and people with a disability** – Faith leaders and CHVs have been equipped with skills on creating awareness on FP and social inclusion including reaching with persons with disability in the community. Some of the platforms they use to create awareness are places of worship, male-engagement sessions at the community, mother-to-mother support groups and door-to-door household visits.

**Faith Actors have partnered with the Ministry of Health to strengthen the Public health sector:** Faith leaders are being invited to participate in decision making through Reproductive Health Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent Health (RHMNCAH) Technical working groups (TWGs); Performance review meetings, Commodity management and service provision.

**Contribution to Learning:** Faith leaders participated in a DESIP Program study: *Does clarifying scriptural messages around family planning affect the attitudes and perceptions of religious leaders?* Some Lessons: (i) Engagement of religious umbrella bodies enables the assembly and connection of interfaith partners to collaborate (iii) Support for faith Leaders’ mass engagement via local radio stations in vernacular languages is highly impactful for FP demand creation.

**Faith voices amplified:** Faith leaders have shared FP faith-based demand creation strategies in County and National RMNCAH learning fora. The approach has generated a lot of interest among FP stakeholders including donors, partners and MoH and been adopted by some counties e.g. Some male FLs were recognized for their impact and engaged as FP Champions in one of the Counties in Kenya.



Attentive listening and asking questions



### 3.7 Intergenerational partnerships for adolescent and youth SRHR

This session aimed to offer reflections on the level of Adolescent and youth participation (including positions) within faith institutions; to appreciate the various adolescent and youth vulnerabilities that put them at risk of engaging in many SRH risky behaviors; to understand intergenerational barriers and enablers for adolescents and youth access to SRHR services within our different faiths; and to promote intergenerational partnerships for adolescent and youth SRHR.

In this session, speaker **Hezron Cotts Masitsa**, Peacebuilding Technical Lead, Faith to Action Network, reflected on the level of adolescent and youth participation within faith institutions; the adolescent and youth vulnerabilities that put them at risk of engaging in risky behaviors; intergenerational barriers and enablers for adolescents and youth to access SRHR services

in different faiths; and intergenerational partnerships for adolescent and youth SRHR.

#### *Top take-aways:*

- Intergenerational Partnerships (IP) have all generations work together to create change
- Intergenerational Partnerships are based on an understanding of the interdependent, symbiotic nature of running affairs and recognizing that youths and adults have something different yet equally valuable to share with each other.
- Intergenerational Partnerships are not about creating leaders of tomorrow, it is about supporting and empowering the young citizens of today.
- Marginalization of young people has real-world effects, as does ageism has real-world effects.
- That we collectively are able to promotion of AYSRHR through embracing intergenerational Partnerships.



*Participants keenly listening to an ongoing session*



*Happiness as different people shared their experiences was part of the agenda*

## 4.0 Women's Rights and Gender Justice

Eight convention sessions examined women's rights and gender justice from different faith perspectives.

### 4.1 Power of Voices – from power shifting to power sharing

This session sought to unpack the abstract concept of power, enabling participants to realize how power affects each of us all the time and how each of us has a voice in power relationships. Powershifting is an important theme in programs and partnerships and in national and international political frameworks. Powershifting has various connotations and interpretations and is context-related. In theory, powershifting strives for equal partnership throughout all levels, vertically and horizontally. Within the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA), for example, this includes among international and local partners (vertically) and among local partners (horizontally).

During the reflection session, small groups consisting of 4-5 people were invited to remember and confidentially share two situations: one in which another person had power and one in which they themselves had power. The situations could be taken from their personal and/or work life.

The groups had the time and space to share and reflect, to dream and write down their wishes for a fruitful and meaning full power sharing process in their work. The following questions were considered: What is a prerequisite for power sharing? What can you do to create a more equal collaboration? What are you dreaming of when it comes to power sharing in your working environment, in working with communities, people, donors, stakeholders and others? What can you do and what are you going to do in order to create a more balanced environment?



*Group discussion on the power of voices*

Discussions produced the following:

Attitude / approach to encourage power sharing	Making power sharing possible	Inclusion	Actors	Dreams / bigger goals
Listen more – talk less	Empower (young) women with leadership skills & in leadership roles	Women Youth Minorities	Religious leaders in frontline of governance	Communities free from oppression, hostility and oppression
Recognize the power of diversity	Empower young women to know their rights and claim their space		Political leaders	Stable politics; justice
I step back and let others win & shine	Speaking same language and equally respected	Inclusion of women voices in the religious bodies	TEAM work	Muslims treated fairly by security agencies
Current people in power put themselves in the shoes of people without power	Draw plans together, implement together and evaluate together	Inclusion of Young clergy in decision making processes		End corruption for meaningful power sharing
Appreciate the other and his efforts	Take ownership of your learning agenda and ask for support if needed	Religions represented at government level		Peaceful transition in Uganda
Listen, understand and value national partners	Power sharing through delegation and participation	Using the innovation of the youth		Wave all debt; more equal division of wealth
Recognizing that we are stronger together	Create spaces of power for those without power			World citizenship

Attitude / approach to encourage power sharing	Making power sharing possible	Inclusion	Actors	Dreams / bigger goals
	Genuine consultation			
	Educate children & youth and their parents in dialogue, growth & development to be future leaders			
	Amplifying messages at national & international level through partnership			
	Document learnings so that they can be shared			
	Economic empowerment for youth/women			



*Group discussion and presentation during a session on Power of Voices – from power shifting to power sharing*

## 4.2 #NoMoreRhetoric: Moving from inertia to action against SGBV – Interfaith strategies to end SGBV

This session sought to engage faith organizations and partners from different backgrounds and contexts on their role in preventing gender-based violence. It looked at building consensus on the importance of working together towards fighting for gender rights geared towards gender just laws, ending SGBV, political participation, and gender equality. The goal was to provide delegates with a safe space to reflect on their experiences, share perspectives, best practices and actions taken to prevent and end gender-based violence with their organizations and within their faith communities.

### Top take-aways

- The fight to end SGBV is a collective responsibility of all actors, including women rights organizations, faith based organizations and the government.

- Faith institutions are key agents of change and should play a key role in ending SGBV.
- Laws and policies should be enacted or reviewed to prevent and respond to ending SGBV in the community.

**Mbaraza Modi**, Executive Director, YWCA South Sudan explained that South Sudan is a war-torn county, with highly entrenched patriarchy and girls auctioned for marriage at the age of 14 to the highest bidder, with no say in the process. Trauma healing and counselling sessions helps SGBV survivors access psychosocial support. They can then be introduced to peacebuilding and economic support. A young women’s advocacy forum gives girls an opportunity to speak out about issues affecting them. The Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy and Accountability project (YW4A) project contributes to ending SGBV by working to develop the leadership capacity of young women. It has also addressed specific cases, such as a government minister subjecting his wife to domestic violence. YWCA South Sudan



Mbaraza Modi, YWCA South Sudan (left) Nagwa Eldeeb, Ibrahimia Media Centre, Catherine Wanjiku, World YWCA (centre), Hawa Ally Puzo, YWCA Kisii, Dr Nelson Makanda (Rev.) Evangelical, Alliance of Kenya (right)

moved out of the Anglican Church to be more inclusive. Being independent helps the YWCA create a platform where women and girls can feel free and enables women to keep their own faith while including others.

**Nagwa Eldeeb**, YW4A Project Manager at Ibrahimia Media Center (IMC) presented the IMC work in engaging families in preventing and addressing GBV by awareness raising and improving communication skills. She encourages the engagement of as many diverse faith leaders as possible in fighting domestic violence from a faith perspective. The faith leaders can be engaged by using practical examples, advocating for moving from traditional ways (old fashioned preaching) to innovative and creative approaches, such as videos when targeting youth. She recommends engaging lawyers for raising awareness on legal matters. The media can be used as a tool to advocate for women's rights by reaching the masses. Some challenges in working on women rights include patriarchy (most spaces in the community are masculine) and resistance from religious leaders, community and men. In conclusion, she recommends adopting the "3 As" to SGBV: Assess, Act, Achieve.

**Rev. Dr. Nelson Makanda**, General Secretary, Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK), explained that The Church in Kenya is an agent of change and has impacted social norms and cultures. The church has played a key role in transforming social norms such as wife inheritance. Where the social norms are yet to be transformed, the church in those areas tends to be weak. If the church is engaged positively it will transform communities. Faith is facilitative, its programs span education(schools), hospitals and health care. Church leadership brings in the voices of women. Women are now involved in decision

making in faith institutions. Scriptures can be used to instill positive values: in Kenya the Rev. Dr. Makanda influenced schools to include stories of Judah and Tamar to teach against gender based violence and explain about rape. To better engage faith actors to champion for gender equality requires changing faith leaders from within, identifying allies and asking questions from outside. Civil society should not change faith leaders from outside.

Rev. Dr. Makanda concluded by affirming the importance of collaboration and creating partnerships between diverse institutions, working closely with women rights organizations, medical practitioners, faith actors and government. The government has a role to play in service provision and should be lobbied to do so. Faith actors should make an effort to be part of formation of policies related to SGBV in their countries.

**Hawa Ally Puzo**, Young Woman beneficiary of YW4A from YWCA Kisii, Kenya, explained that it has been difficult to work with faith institutions on issues affecting young women. Mosques are not talking about sex because it is a taboo. Communities should be encouraged to know basic SGBV laws. New trends that promote SGBV should be learnt and countered, such as medicalization of female genital mutilation (FGM).

Participants in the session provided helpful insights from their contexts:

- In Palestine, the links between the strategies from different sectors e.g. the judiciary is key to ending SGBV. When it comes to leadership of young women there is legal pluralism and dialogue on translation of Sharia to address problems faced by women.



- Al Azhar University in Egypt addresses gender based violence. Group of experts from medical institutions and religious institutions who identify instances of GBV developed a manual on violence against women and girls (VAWG) and use a training of trainers (TOT) approach to reach religious leaders.
- In Uganda and in many African countries, cases of incest and defilement persist. The laws on gender based violence are weak. Religious leaders should engage in advocating for review of laws and policies. Weak laws demoralize efforts of religious leaders in addressing GBV.
- The Western Uganda FBO Network explained that positive religious norms and social norms not followed especially by the youths, for example no sex before marriage. Some religious leaders setting bad precedent like subjecting their spouses to domestic violence. There should be dialogue between men and women on issues affecting them, including domestic violence. Clergy spouses are engaged in mobilizing women and addressing issues faced by women. Favorable laws and policies often not implemented, and there is also lack of awareness on many of them. Civil societies and FBO should participate in law and policy making.
- Peter Munene explained that F2A Network is exploring how to empower young people and instruments to empower them to become champions of change against SGBV, the use of school curriculums can help. Civil society outside should identify institutions to work with within the faith community. This also saves on resources.

### 4.3 Consultations on women’s rights in Christianity – sharing and learning

Faith organizations have a critical role to play in promoting women’s rights for the benefit of their congregations and their communities at large. This session reported back on recent consultations that the F2A Network conducted with Christian institutions on women’s rights in Christianity and activated conversations with



Participants listening keenly during a session on consultations on women’s rights in Christianity - sharing and learning session

delegates on promoting women's rights within faith organizations. The participants were equipped with an urgency and significance of women's rights in a faith context, they were able to identify, reflect, and present solutions to challenges in support of women's rights within faith organizations and finally identify feasible actions in support of women's rights, leveraging faith institutions and platforms.

#### **Top take-aways:**

- There is a high level of awareness among consultation participants and session participants on why it is important to promote women's rights within the Christian faith.
  - Influence of culture still competes with people's ability to practice religion and uphold women's rights.
  - The consultations need to strengthen having a structured follow up mechanism
- Create a safe space for faith actors to share their experiences and network with others interested in strengthening their institution's capacity to advance women's rights. This allows faith actors to ask difficult questions related to religion and human rights.
  - Improve theological literacy on women's rights and knowledge of key legal instruments and support faith actors' ability to draw from the faith scriptures and teachings to promote women's rights in different parts of the world
  - Deepen faith actors awareness of women's rights globally and the need for faith communities to invest in promoting them

where the participants have plans of action that F2A support them (technically and if possible financially) to implement.

**Judy Aroke**, Program Manager, Faith to Action Network, explained that the consultations were started to:



*Judy Aroke, Programme Manager at Faith to Action Network , presenting on Consultations on women's rights in Christianity*

- Enable faith actors to creatively generate resources for overcoming roadblocks caused by problematic interpretations of culture, scriptures and teachings
- Help faith actors to undertake effective actions and steps to promote women's rights within faith communities and the larger society
- Support faith actors ability to bring their organizations to commit to and do more to promoting women's rights
- Promote faith actors capacity to mobilize themselves and their organizations to work collaboratively to present a unified faith voice to the agenda of upholding and promoting women's rights.
- Help align faith actors and civil society align with SDG 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and SDG 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels).

The consultations were created because faith institutions must have dedicated space and time to reflect on and discuss their own relevant beliefs and experiences of gender discrimination and the role of religion in perpetuating cultural norms. Once empowered with greater self-awareness and resources, they can advocate for institutional support of gender equality and women's rights. Allies can actively engage with their respective faith leadership and governance and identify concrete steps the institutions can take to promote gender equality.

The Consultations were organized using the See-Judge-Act method of analysis. This means seeing social situations, judging them in light of Christian principles, and acting to promote justice and improve the situations of those

served—helps promote thoughtful reflection with concrete action. A consultation facilitator's guide was developed, called "Women's Rights in Christian Communities." Facilitators were selected who had significant theological knowledge, strong gender awareness, and knowledge and experience. Faith-based change agents were identified across sub-Saharan Africa (Western, Central, Eastern, and Southern regions) and invited to regional meetings for participants to share their experiences and network with others interested in strengthening their institution's capacity to advance women's rights. Participants developed action plans to effect change and reforms within their faith institutions.

Sessions in the regional meetings included:

- **Session 1 Preparation** - How to handle online teleconferencing
- **Session 2 "Who do you say I am?"** introduces participants to each other and to the consultation objectives and supports a process of individual reflection into participants' own attitudes regarding gender and women's rights.
- **Session 3 "Faith for Rights"** introduces key women rights legal texts. Establishes the extent to which the Christian faith promotes women's rights and gender equality. Participants start reflecting on faith organization's practices influencing women's rights.
- **Session 4 "Our challenges"** looks at women's lived realities and identifies women's rights violations. Participant will see to which extent the Christian faith has negatively shaped women's rights and gender equality.
- **Session 5 "Working Together for Good"** invites participants to dialogue with a women's rights organization. It looks at the challenges of working on faith and women's

rights, the value of working together and opportunities for effective collaboration.

- **Session 6 “The harvest is plenty, but laborers are few”** helps participants understand internal factors affecting faith-based organization’s engagement with women’s rights. Participants will identify strategies on how faith actors and their organizations can advance women’s rights within the faith community.
- **Session 7 “Consolidating and forming Links”** establishes a feedback loop between participants and their institutions, and helps participants reflect on potential challenges to carrying out internal advocacy. Participants will summarize their contexts and potential action plans as gleaned from a reflection session with their leaders and staff. This information can be presented in a power-point, a poster or map. Presentation of this work will act as a bridge between the online sessions and the physical meeting.

**Bonginkosi Moyo – Bango**, Methodist Church of Southern Africa, shared the following main issues that came out of the consultations:

- There was a deep awareness amongst the participants on what faith has in place in relation to women’s rights.
- The participants had acute sensitivity towards deployment of texts of terror in the Bible.
- Likewise, the participants were aware about positive bible verses that support women’s rights and they can use to strengthen their discussion on the same.
- There was an appreciation of positive interventions to promote women’s rights, personal responsibility by participants is high (I need to play my part as an individual).
- Most people are not aware of international principles and laws that their counties have ratified and are available for their use.

- There is a history of missionaries and church communities standing up for women’s rights hence this goodwill can continue to be used to promote women’s rights.
- Religious communities are huge, have power and can influence change.
- There is an awareness that FBOs are already doing so much good work on advocating for women’s rights.

Some challenges were raised by the participants in the consultation sessions. Participants asked: Why promote women’s rights in Christianity? Religion has emerged as a double edged sword used to either promote or suppress women. There are blurred lines between culture and religion, as many Christians practice both in equal measure and most oppression occurs where there two meet. It is important to acknowledge the capacity of FBOs in terms of resourcing, some may have the aspiration for change but have inadequate funding to invest in processes.

#### 4.4 Lessons and experiences from a faith-based gender assessment approach

Faith based organizations have a profound focus on the promotion of ideas and values, which shape their distinctive organizational forms and set them apart from other types of organizations. Unfortunately, the gender agenda of faith organizations has attracted little analysis. To close this gap, F2A developed a faith-based gender assessment methodology that guides faith organizations in conducting gender assessments. The goal of this session was to present the F2A faith-based gender assessment findings and lessons learnt. The participants from different backgrounds

and contexts shared their experiences and perspectives in conducting gender assessments using faith-based methodologies.

**Top take-away:** Faith based organizations (FBOs) are looking for ways of conducting assessment that are unique to their situations, the faith-based gender assessment provides that opportunity and guidance on how to go about it.

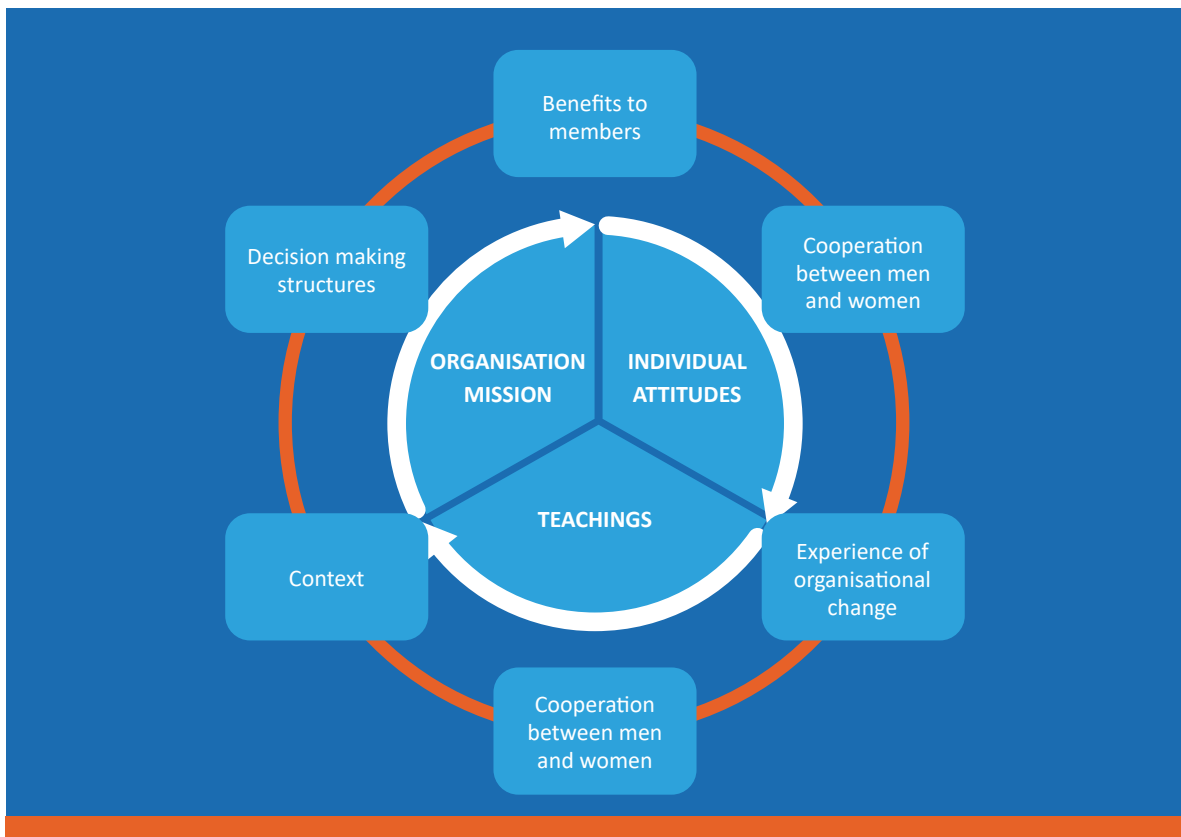
**Judy Amoke**, Program Manager, Faith to Action Network, described the faith-based gender assessment approach. Because gender equality in faith organizations has attracted little analysis, this tool focuses on the promotion of ideas and values, which shape their distinctive organizational forms and set them apart from other types of organizations. It provides a scope to equip communities with resources to fight for gender justice. It helps transform their social values and practices that legitimize oppression, discrimination, and violence against women.

Faith-based gender assessment is a methodology that guides diverse faith organizations in conducting gender assessments. It seeks to facilitate a transformative organizational change process of embedding gender equality and young women's rights within faith organizations. It provides a sequential approach to assist faith organizations to reflect on the extent to which it has integrated gender equality into the organization's policies, beliefs, vision, mission, decision-making structures, teachings, and practices. The gender assessment process results in a set of priorities, from which the faith organizations can develop an action plan to embed gender equality within their organization.

The gender assessment methodology process starts with obtaining approval and commitment

from FBOs' senior leadership. After identifying and selecting committed women's rights champions within targeted faith organizations, a two-day participatory reflective workshop takes place with women's rights champions, to enhance their knowledge of women's rights and gender equality from a faith and human rights perspective. Women's rights champions are equipped with skills and knowledge to conduct the gender assessment. Desk review examines organizations' documents, including legal documents, sacred texts and sources, teachings, policies, handbooks and other documents. Focus group discussions (FGDs) are conducted with groups of women and men from senior leadership, youth groups and the community. These FGDs provide valuable insights and information into personal beliefs, views and perceptions regarding gender equality and women's rights in the organizations. Key informant interviews (KIIs) are conducted with senior faith leaders, faith organization leadership, legal actors and faith organizations staff members. These KIIs collect the views and experiences of key informants on gender equality within their organization. Data analysis is conducted using a gender marker tool; this informs preparation of a gender assessment report and present to the institution leadership, which is responsible for then implementing the resultant gender action plan.

The gender assessment examines nine organization features/domains that help faith-based organizations identify the level of gender equality in the organization's vision and mission, core values, teachings, policies and strategies, decision-making structures and formal and informal practices, as captured in the diagram shown here.



**Peter Malir**, Executive Director, Christian Agency for Peace and Development (CAPaD), South Sudan expressed his view that faith actors should all have and use the gender assessment. CAPaD used the assessment to collect baseline information on the status of FBOs in the YW4A project. South Sudan has limited women’s participation in institutions including faith organizations. Civil societies and FBOs have however embarked on a plan to increase women’s participation demanding for a minimum of 35% representation, this has been included in the Constitution. The cultural practices and faith practices clash a lot. CAPaD is engaged in the awakening of women and creating spaces for proper conversations to go on.



*Peter Malir, Executive Director, Christian Agency for Peace and Development (CAPaD), South Sudan*

**Nagwa Eldeeb**, YW4A Project Manager at Ibrahimia Media Center (IMC), Egypt, explained that religious institutions are not just a places of prayer; they should be used to achieve gender equality. The gender assessment enabled each FBO in the YW4A project to have baseline information. All FBOs were open and willing to take on gender equality and women's rights. Challenges of the gender assessment included the amount of time it takes. Stakeholders and participants need to be given a sense of ownership, which requires investing time in mobilizing them to participate. Specific descriptions for each rate or mark on the assessment can be added to the analysis tools to better guide the outcome. An important benefit of the gender assessment is that different social strata are reached. Ms. Eldeeb recommends scheduling focus group discussions in upcoming assessment because they generate useful information. Ms. Eldeeb recommends that FBOs work on women's empowerment from a rights



*Nagwa Butros, Programme Manager, Ibrahimia Media Centre*

perspective, have good internal policies that are visible and accessible, and start working on changing stereotypes of men and women.

Participants in the session were impressed with the comprehensiveness and helpfulness of the faith-based gender assessment and how it strengthens monitoring and evaluation processes. They asked about the role of the media and whether the voice of the LGBTIQ+ could be strengthened. They remarked on the need to encourage more women to occupy decision making spaces, provide equal opportunities for women and men and encourage girls and how helpful it would be to have a systemic way of measuring change both within and outside FBOs.

#### 4.5 Enhancing cross-movement collaboration between faith-based women's rights movements

This session aimed to enhance collaboration between faith-based women's rights movements present at the convention by learning to develop a common vision and strategy on working together as women's rights movements; create strategic alliances with other movements without losing their autonomy; position agendas in different spaces; create and leverage spaces for dialogue with decision-makers; and get technical and financial support for institutional strengthening.

**Dr. Nontando Hadebe** explained that Side by Side is a growing global movement of faith leaders and communities, faith-based organizations and individuals of faith who are committed to removing barriers to gender justice. They draw together faith communities in different countries, and work together wherever possible to meet local challenges in bringing

about justice and equality for all people, irrespective of gender. Side-by-Side is working to:

- Develop a more focused and coordinated faith response across and within sectors, faiths and geographically, for example, through helping to establish national and regional faith coalitions for gender justice, establishing spaces for inter-faith dialogue and a global faith response to the SDG gender targets
- Support national symposiums and national coalitions; build awareness, capacity and commitment among faith leaders to challenge and change damaging social norms and address social, political, religious and economic gender inequality issues in their communities.
- Support faith leaders and FBOs to engage collectively with government, regional and international policy for a, and the media, to seek laws, policies and services that recognize, prevent and respond to gender inequality.

**Deborah Olwal- Modi** of YWCA Kenya spoke on behalf of World YWCA. She explained that World YWCA is a grassroots-driven, global movement rooted in the leadership of women, young women, and girls. They are committed to progressive, community-based leadership, particularly through programming that is led by and for young women. She announced a call to action by Casey Harden, the General Secretary of World YWCA to put women’s rights issues at the front of our actions. We should not lose focus of the young generation of women looking up to us.

Deborah presented that YWCA Kenya the oldest women’s national body in Kenya has a main purpose is to develop the collective power of girls and women in Kenya to achieve social, economic, political and cultural “emancipation”. It does this by engaging and working with young women to enhance their leadership skills of young women to enable them become confident and economically empowered.



*Group discussion during a session*



She believes that women rights movements are uniquely placed to amplify the voices of women from the community to the global spaces. We have access to these spaces and we need to meaningfully engage with women and bring them to these spaces. Let us kill the competition between organizations.

A representative of the Women of Faith Network described the global women of Faith Network as a global network consisting of women religious leaders from different religious institutions aimed at advancing FoRB and women leadership. Led by the International Women's Coordinating Committee, the Global Women of Faith Network consists of religious women's organizations at the national and regional levels.

When asked what different things can the women's rights organizations do to have a joint voice, the speakers responded that women's rights and faith advocates can strengthen global solidarity by creating platforms where and activists can reach others to share ideas, stories, news and projects. Advocacy spaces can be territorial and competitive, as we are all trying to ensure that our voice is present. Despite this, we can work together whilst appreciating the unique value that each of our organization have, work together to bring to the front faith voices on women's rights issues.

The speakers explained that faith voices have a unique opportunity to embed intergenerational approaches in our organizational approaches; consider joint advocacy actions at regional and international spaces where women rights movements already access; and share resources and information with movements to conduct joint capacity building of women led groups and community groups. Together, they argued that we can strengthen global solidarity by creating platforms where women's rights and faith

advocates and activists can reach other to share ideas, stories, news and projects.

The F2A Network annual convention provides a safe space for collaboration, experience sharing and movement building among different stakeholders. It provides an opportunity to build cross movement interaction between gender justice and women's rights activists in this space. Together, we can provide joint collective faith-based messages, advocacy messages without losing autonomy. The session ended with a call to action for Faith to Action Network to continue with the conversation on the women rights movements present.

#### 4.6 The road to gender justice: The story of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) personal status law reforms demonstrate that faith organizations can achieve structural changes within faith institutions and leverage for legal / policy reform of religious laws. The goal of this session was to showcase ELCJHL success in leading the process of reforming gender laws (working with judges in religious courts) within the context of the Palestinian legal system. Their story inspired women rights advocates to continue pursuing gender equality. The session was a hybrid one, conducted both in English and Arabic and also virtually on Zoom.

##### **Top take-aways:**

- Palestine has a complex political situation that reflects in the lives of women, continuing to marginalize and oppress them.
- There is need to amend the culture too and not just laws and policies, working with local

communities is crucial, social interventions are needed to tackle domestic violence.

- The women should be empowered to utilize the court system.

**Judge Samoud al-Damiri**, Chief Prosecutor, Sharia Court Palestine and Judge of the Sharia Court of Appeal in Ramallah explained that the Palestinian constitution states that Palestinians are equal before the law and judiciary hence there is no discrimination on the basis of age, gender, disability, religious and political issues. Sharia courts operate independently of regular courts. The function of the Sharia courts is to abdicate on personal issues such as marriage, divorce, custody, alimony, orphans and minors' affairs, proof of parentage and more. Sharia court judges are members of the judiciary and are a part of the government. The judges have a double identity as religious leaders and as judges. Under legal pluralism, conditions for women have become harder and more complex. There are many laws in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem and different jurisdictions because

of the political situation. Movement between the jurisdictions happens frequently, hindering the access to justice. Monitoring the laws is important. Frequent evaluation is needed, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has required increased interventions such as digitalization of visitation rights. Palestinian women need to work together under the umbrella of citizenship, though there remain separate areas where Christians and Muslims can work independently.

**Judge Scarlet Bishara**, Judge in the Sharia, Catholic and Orthodox courts in Palestine explained that there are gaps and discrimination in the ecclesiastical courts based on family laws. The legal age for marriage age in Palestine has risen to 18 years, but many people reject the law. As a result, there are many legal cases under the law, with girls being married below age 18. These go to Sharia courts to approve the marriage, backed by a medical report, and at times pregnancy reports. The Sharia court will



*Judge Samoud al-Damiri, Chief Prosecutor, Sharia Court Palestine and Judge of the Sharia Court of Appeal in Ramallah and Judge Scarlet Bishara, Judge in the Sharia, Catholic and Orthodox courts in Palestine*

approve the marriage in the best interest of the pregnancy/newborn. Law enforcement actors are weak in how they administer the laws.

**Ranan Issa**, Gender Justice Program Manager, ELCJHL, explained that the Lutheran Church believes that women and men are born equal. Countries in the Middle East have treated Christians as ethnic minorities. Each church regulates the family affairs of their members under the church authority, this includes marriage and family law. Each church therefore has unique set of personal status laws and court processes through which such matters are governed. These laws are however the most challenging obstacles to the advancement of gender justice. They are discriminative in all matters related to marriage, divorce, child custody and much more. The laws provide sufficient legal power for men to take control of their wives' religion at home and in the society.

She shared a story of how the Lutheran Church took action to achieve gender equality. Ten years ago, some women in the Lutheran Church approached the church with evidence of domestic violence. The church was horrified that the women suffer from abusive relations and cannot leave their husbands according to the family law. The women's committee and women in the church started working together and approached the church leadership with an idea to have their own Lutheran family law that is based on equality and justice. The Bishop, who supports women's rights, approved and set up a committee to start a process of making the idea a reality. The women's committee started having workshops with the pastors, members and everyone to talk about gender justice and why it is important citing the value it has for the church. A committee was set up to draft a new Lutheran Family Law. The committee examined

international laws like CEDAW and other church laws and drafted the first family law for the Lutheran Church. They submitted the draft bill to the Church Council for finalization.

The Church Council was resistant, questioning why they should be the first church to change tradition, how the change will be taken by other churches, how sensitive issues like divorce and inheritance will be handled. The bill drafters were disappointed but kept fighting. They continued explaining why gender equality is important in the church basing arguments on the Lutheran theology. Eventually, the Council approved the bill, they now have a family law and ecclesiastical court. The new law has enabled them (among other gains) to raise the marriage age to 18 years, spouses are entitled to joint and equal financial rights, all children of deceased parents are entitled to equal inheritance.

#### 4.7 Women's rights and Islam: Teachings vs. realities

This session aimed to share perspectives, lived realities and theological grounding on what Islam says about Women's Rights for the delegates to get an understanding of Women's Rights in Islam. It sought to give women's rights advocates knowledge and information to champion for women's rights in Muslim societies and communities; to create a safe space for faith actors to share perspectives and insights on Women's Rights in Islam including: advancing gender equality, promoting women's participation in private, public, and political life, preventing violence against women (sexual and gender-based violence and domestic violence, advancing women's property rights, promoting the right of custody to children and promoting

women's right to bodily integrity; and to give a theological grounding and understanding on what Islamic texts say about women's rights.

**Prof. Alimatul Qibtiyah**, Muhammadiyah University, presented a theological document prepared in consultation with Muhammadiyah and Aisysiyah scholars. She spoke about the universal values of gender equality in Islam, approaches to understanding religious texts and examples of contentious gender issues in Islam. The root causes of gender equality include:

- Patriarchal culture;
- Misogynic religious interpretation; and
- Gender-biased policies, which lead to negative stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, multiple burden and violence.

There are various meanings of gender, including gender considered as a social construction,

as a matter when looking at injustice, as a perspective, analysis tool and movement of consciousness. The principles of Gender equality in Islam include:

- We are all servants of God
- We are the same equality in creation
- We have the same seductive qualities in heaven
- We must be responsible for his/her deeds in the world

Muhammadiyah and Aisysiyah have seen and used three approaches to understand religious texts:

- Textual/conservative: Bayani- Texts, Anbabul Nuzul, Asbabul Wurud (Historical approach) and comprehensive reading (hermeneutic);
- Moderate/progressive: Burhani- Data Experiences which recognises Diversity, Science research; and



Faith community commit to ending violence against women and girls

- Liberal/progressive: Irfani- considering spiritual wisdom and emphasizing on humanity.

Misogyny can be found in Qur'an interpretations; interpreters are mostly male and heavily influenced by culture and upbringing, education and media. The principle of gender equality has not changed, but its form maybe different from today. The Qur'an strongly supports gender justice and has universal values.

Examples of contentious gender issues in Islam and in society include:

- **Women's participation in private, public and political life:** There are restrictions on the role of women in public and in politics. Verses in the Quran actively encourage men and women to engage in public and political spaces. Women can prove to be good and effective leaders and the scripture speaks of the involvement of women in the political field.
- **Violence against women is prohibited in Islam.** The QS Al-Nisa states that Nusyus (disobedience and disloyalty) should be solved based on the principles of love and compassion, justice and in a ma'ruf way. Sexual violence is also prohibited in Islam. It prohibits sexual harassment and exploitation of workers.
- **Status of women's property rights.** Data shows that various countries with Muslim majority populations show that men own more property than women do. Property is mentioned 82 times in the Qur'an and has an important role in the welfare of both and female. Islam regulates how men and women can own property together.
- **Equal rights of inheritance.** Managing property is one of the elements of the five principles that protected and is the goal of the implementation of shariah. In the pre Islamic period, this did not take place. When

livelihood is a shared responsibility, fair distribution can be implemented.

- **Rights of custody to children.** Both male and female parents have the same rights and obligations in raising children. The Quran tends to the parental or bilateral kinship system and not to the matrilineal or patrilineal kinship system. Scholars have different opinions regarding marriage guardians.
- **The right to bodily integrity.** Religion has a role in addition to culture and state regulations in determining gender roles and identities including the regulation on women's bodies. The debate about the Hijab is seen as both religious and political. For Muslim women, the hijab is a symbol of piety, religious observance, rejection of westernization and women's freedom. The use of the hijab does not describe the personality of the perfect woman, scholars agree.

**Prof. Ahmed Ragab**, Al Azar University reported that Islam has no rights but rather duties. Duties of one person becomes the rights of someone else. There is no discrepancy in Islam between men and women. It instead abolished inhumanity, inequality, discrimination towards women and gave a code of conduct for male and female. In many Muslim societies, Muslims practice their own culture, customs and women are subjected to cultural issues, patriarchal features of their society and political oppression.

Islam does not allow domination of men over women rather it upholds the rights, dignity, honor and status of women but ensuring gender equality and equality of rights for both male and female in every areas of human life. He shared the following misconceptions: that men are superior to women; that men are allowed to beat women; and that one man equals two women.

The speakers fielded questions from an enthusiastic audience of participants. Below are the main topics addressed.

- Patriarchal culture and dominating male interpreters have influenced the discrepancies. Religious leaders are men and therefore interpret according to their understanding. There are few female religious leaders.
- There is a lack of contextual understanding of the original meaning of the religious texts. There is a gap between the understanding of the text and the historical context. Part of the differences are due to the cultural practices, which have influenced traditional practices and religious texts. Limited understanding of Islam has caused a number of issues on gender equality and the religious leaders conveying messages to the community have this limited understanding. Also: the Arabic language used to convey the recommendation is rich and is interpreted according to different contexts.
- There is a debate that a Muslim man can marry a non-Muslim woman, but this is not the same for a Muslim woman who is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim man. This debate will not end any time soon. The interpretation that Muslim men can marry non-Muslim women is not an equal position on gender equality. It shows that women do not have independence and it should rightly be interpreted that women can marry non-Muslim men. Marriage is a complex matter and there are different reasons for marriage-political, social and cultural. However, the scripture shows that marriage is solely to attain peacefulness, harmony between men and women.
- Muslim women are few in leadership positions. It is slow but it is slowly changing. There are women heading states that are more successful than male led states. Many women are taking up leadership positions and with time, we will see more women taking these positions.



Group discussion was a great way to ensure participants share and jot down their views

- There is no Qur’anic verses saying that women are created from Adam’s rib. This hadith is interpreted in a negative way that women are crooked and cannot be straightened. If it can be looked at from a different perspective, it is interpreted that the rib is an important organ of the body protecting vital body organs.

The most effective strategies for developing awareness on Qur’anic views on gender equality include:

- Formation of think tanks in Muslim organizations to look at issues affecting the community and reference to religious texts.
- Development of manuals and papers that provide recommendations of issues and re interpretation of religious texts.
- Ensured implementation of manuals and papers. It is impossible to train all religious leaders in a country, but using a TOT approach, trained religious leaders can train other religious leaders on gender equality.
- Creating space for female religious leaders to take roles within the organization.
- Packaging existing materials and research studies on gender and Islam in a creative way, such as working with youth and technology.
- Invite religious leaders and policy makers to adapt these existing gender and Islam materials to their contexts.
- Contextualize gender issues to be presented in discussions on gender equality and Islam without changing traditional Islamic values.

## 4.8 Orange the world: End violence against women now!

This session aimed to have rich and deep discussions on what the faith community has done to end Gender Based Violence (GBV). Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences with working against GBV and their activities during the 16 days of activism campaign. The session brought delegates to a safe space to interact and share on ending GBV in their communities. The space was a culmination of the 16 days of activism campaign by the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA).

### Top take-aways:

- Households and communities, including local leaders, do not adequately support victims of SGBV but continue to shame and stigmatize them.
- Reforms in laws and policies are required to address grey areas such as sexual engagement between minors.
- Encouraging vulnerable community members to report incidences of violence helps to improve access to justice.
- Creation of safe space to learn, discuss and raise issues related to SGBV is key in helping women and girls to open up and seek redress.

**Deborah Olwal-Modi**, National General Secretary, YWCA Kenya, spoke about a social dilemma. The YWCA Kenya came across a 14-year old girl who has had a baby with her father, raising lots of questions: What does her father call her baby - is it his grandchild or his son? How does the girl call her mother - a mother or

co-wife / step mother? The girl shared the news of her pregnancy with her mother, who told her to keep family peace. The mother wanted to keep her marriage, so the girl should keep quiet. The girl reported the issue to the Chief, who said that the matter has to be put underground. The girl went to the religious community, who said the issue should be kept quiet to not spoil the name of their community. The girl's question was where does the child's future lie? This is a case of incest. Neither the community nor the law would permit abortion, unless under special circumstances. The girl was contemplating suicide and is undergoing counselling.

There is hope for the work to end SGBV, but there are bumps on the road. There is hope now that men and religious leaders have joined in the fight and use their influence to spread the word. Governments have put policies in place to end SGBV. Civil society has picked up SGBV issues, providing some support to access justice processes.

**Shamsa Abubkar Fadhil**, Community Mobilizer and Mediator, told a story from last January. A 16-year-old girl had been repeatedly been sexually abused. Gender activists took up the case, looking for the perpetrator only to find that he was a boy, also a minor. The boy had been in remand jail for one year, as there is no penal law code in Kenya on those issues. The gender activists defended the girl, and then the boy. Making the matter more complicated, the girl is a Muslim, while the boy is a Christian. The girl's family were not happy that the activists also defended the boy. The boy was awarded Kes. 200,000 by the government. Activists are now pushing for a re-drafting of the penal code law to clarify sexual engagement of minors.

**Rev. Atuhaire Moses**, Executive Director, Western Uganda FBO Network explained that when they started inter-faith work against GBV, colleagues were active in spreading the word. During a District Development Children's Committee meeting,



*Rev. Moses Atuhaire (left), Rev. Norah Naitore (Center) and ArchBishop Mnisi (right) are at the forefront in ending violence against women and girls*



a Probation Officer reported a needy girl who was being abused. The girl had been adopted by someone working at the orphanage, a man who repeatedly abused the girl. The girl took an investigating team to where the abuse happened, the man was arrested, taken to court and sentenced, the girl received justice.

**Nageeba Hassan Tegulwa**, Teacher, Executive Member, African Women of Faith Network, shared a personal experience. Her parents were both illiterate. Her father was from a culture where school is not a priority for girls, who were expected to get married and be pampered. Her mother, however, wanted Nageeba to go to school and overcome poverty, so she raised her own school fees up to the university level. She became the youngest teacher in the school and children, which made children feel safe to open up and share. Most of the children were being abused in their homes by relatives. She did not have the skills to support them. She reached out to the head teacher, who got her in trouble with the parents. At this point, she left teaching, study psychosocial support and went to work in the community to prevent SGBV. It comes with challenges; many people view her badly because she makes sure they go to court.

More and more people begin to believe that SGBV can be prevented, reported and referred. Most African cultures are secretive and do not encourage speaking out. Dialogues can help people to open up and speak out. Religious communities like Women of Faith are being trained as champions to lead violence prevention. They have developed Information-Education-Communication (IEC) materials for faith leaders to integrate into sermons. Conversations are being brought from the back room to the front. Activists including Women of Faith are pushing for safe walk-in spaces within houses of worship and to have skilled people

available. There is a need to network with other actors offering SGBV services.

A question and answer session following the speakers highlighted the following issues:

- Government housing policies do not protect girls. Housing sleeping arrangements (boys and girls sharing rooms, children sharing rooms with parents), heightens the risk of incest. Advocacy on the housing issue is being prioritized by some organizations.
- There are protection by-laws in Palestine that protect women and girls, they protect the victim then go after the perpetrators.
- The word 'defiled' or 'defilement' is commonly used, even in laws. But this word represents victim-blaming, and should not be replicated by social justice activists.

As the faith community we commit to lead  
in ending violence against women and girls



#16Days #OrangeTheWorld #EndGBV



## 5.0 Enhancing Freedom of Religion and Belief to enhance Peaceful Coexistence

Seven convention sessions addressed how enhancing freedom of religion and belief can enhance peaceful coexistence.

### 5.1 Interfaith dialogues as a tool of peacebuilding from below

Participants shared experiences, lessons and success stories of local initiatives aimed at building peace through interfaith dialogues, drawing from practical experiences in Ethiopia, Burundi, Kenya, and South Sudan.

#### *Top take-aways from the session:*

- Simple interfaith dialogue in practice is not theological but about peace-building.
- Past pain can be healed through dialogue.



Participants sharing their views and opinions

*“Until we figure out a sustained way to encourage the unity of the people, conflicts will continue.”*

-- Rev. Jami Sasaka.

- We may not transform the entire mindset of a country, but changing mindsets in the small communities makes a huge contribution to peace-building.
- Religious leaders are being used/ instrumentalized by politicians in some places as agents of conflict and at the same time as instruments of peace. For faith leaders to maintain their own voice, without instrumentalization remains a big challenge.
- Trauma healing and mental wellbeing in countries that have experienced many years of war such as South Sudan and Burundi is crucial to peacebuilding.

**Mr. Yima Hirpa**, Project Manager for the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) at the Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) explained that 97% of Ethiopia’s population follows some form of religion or traditional beliefs, and the country is experiencing growing inter-religious tensions. Interfaith dialogue has helped build peace through dialogues aimed at promoting mutual understanding and mutual problem solving. Interfaith dialogue creates space for building

trust and improving behaviors and relationships. Doing so takes time, but the benefits include bringing people together, harmony, clarifying stereotypes, common problems identified and solutions provided, reduction in conflict and reconciliation.

**Dr. Patrick Mbugua**, Faith to Action Network, presented highlighted the work of the Inter-Religious Council of Burundi (IRCB) to promote dialogue in that country. Issues that create conflict in Burundi are more political than religious, but interfaith approaches have promoted peaceful co-existence by training Christian pastors and Muslim Sheikhs – the people who interact with community members daily – on conflict transformation. IRCB works to bring communities together in three communities that have experienced mass killings, trauma and fear; and one near the border with Rwanda.



*Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan-Pan African Christian Alliance (PACWA)*

**Elizabeth Gadia**, with the Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan-Pan African Christian Alliance (PACWA) explained that experiences in South Sudan are similar to Burundi but the context is different. There is a general perception among South Sudanese that they are fighting “Arabs.” South Sudan has experienced cycles of war since 2013, with several peace agreements that were never implemented. The Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan and PACWA came together to address increasing tensions in the community. They focused on community peace building using dialogue and creating peace committees in places where large number of deaths have happened, where many ethnicities are present, and where the effects of war have been extreme. PACWA brought all faith communities together with the vision of creating an island for peace. PACWA focused on working with women from 14 denominations, because “If we need a community to change from conflict to peaceful co-existence, women are the ones who produce children and take care of their husbands.”

The **Rev. Jami Sasaka**, Executive Director, Chemichemi Ya Ukweli (CYU) presented the work of CYU to bring together religious leaders, politicians and other social groups to analyze issues without recourse to violence. They offer skills on how to respond to violence using theatre and dialogue. They have interventions on radicalization and other forms of social injustice. They use religious texts (Quran, Bible) to analyze situation and bring people a common understanding. They conduct inter-religious dialogue through theological reflections, dialogue of life and the dialogue of peace.

The session also highlighted brief experiences from other grass-root approaches. KECOSCE in Kenya works on Countering Violent Extremism – Building community voices to address some

issues affecting communities. The Coast Inter-religious Council of Clerics (CICC) of Kenya is working with religious leaders, promoting inclusivity within religious faith community. They are sensitizing women on governance so that they can participate in decision-making. They use innovative approach of visiting religious shrines to demystifying religion. WUFBON targets youth and media – they use dialogue, prominent news reporters, dialogue with religious leaders. They conduct campaigns for peaceful co-existence. They use owners of radio stations, most of them owned by faith communities. One of the radio stations has allocated airtime to discuss issues of peaceful co-existence. These activities were conducted under the Communities Richer in Diversity (CRID) project and contributed to scaling up and transition into the JISRA program.



Rev. Jami Sasaka, Executive Director, Chemichemi Ya Ukweli (CYU)

## 5.2 Promoting and sustaining interfaith relations: the faith community experience in Indonesia

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented Indonesian speakers and participants from traveling to Nairobi. Their commitment to the convention showed in a very high rate of online participation, which was important for this session, which aimed to share interfaith practices, approaches and challenges in Indonesia.

### Top session take-aways:

- If one individual changes, that will change affect the whole world.
- Religious differences cannot be used as an excuse for bad behavior or to fight followers of other religions.
- The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is not of war and conflict but a relationship based on peace and harmonious co-existence.

**Neneg Tanti, from Fatayat Nu**, spoke about the organization’s contributions to sustainable development goals, social services and empowerment of society, with a focus on women and children at grass-root level. Objectives include elimination of all forms of violence, promotion of tolerance and understanding, peaceful and sustainable social life and promote moderate Islam in schools aimed at reducing violent extremism. They promote Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB) by building Religious Houses and advocating for the respect of religious symbols. Successes include establishment of sustainable peace structures, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government and a strong evidence-based program.

According to Tanti, Indonesia in an open democratic space, where people can speak freely including on religious beliefs yet religion is very important. People can speak on religious issues without proper knowledge which can provoke intolerance and especially with the social media.

**Ketut Arsana, President, Prajaniti Hindu,** observed that difference is natural and beautiful. The greatness and the beauty of the universe lies in its diversity. Diversity is the natural and scientific nature of the universe. Prajaniti Hindu views all creation as belonging to God, and all human beings as brothers. They promote interfaith relations through education especially with the children and youth. They respect and appreciate local culture everywhere in Indonesia by participating in cultural activities. They are involved in environmental care to save mother earth because they believe that the Universe is the mother of all. They have programs that bring youth together from different areas to promote understanding each other.

*“According to Hindu, we are one inter-connected, inter-connected and inter-dependent. We are one family and this earth is our mother earth.”*

-- Ketut Arsana

Arsana emphasized that by nature, interfaith is Prajaniti Hindu’s daily practice. It’s constitution respects and appreciates all religion, which is particularly important since Indonesia is a multicultural country. Social media has

propagated negative messages, but people have become smarter. The minister for information and communication has helped sensitize people on how to use social media.

**Andi Tijok, Supreme Council of Khonghucu Religion in Indonesia (MATAKINI),** explained their view that there is a vertical relationship between human and the Great Ultimate (Zhong/Satya) as well as SHU – the horizontal relationship between human beings. They are concerned with maintaining peace and harmony

*“The Master said, that would be reciprocity: That which you do not desire, do not do to others.”*

-- Andi Tijok

among religious communities. They respect other religions. They have programs to support inter-faith relationships. They believe in the YIN-YAN principle of complementarity, that differences complement each other. As human beings, harmony begins with self; different characteristics inside each person reflects their different humanities. YIN-YAN also symbolizes gender equality, with YIN representing woman and YAN representing man, neither superior. It recognizes the compatibility between man and woman.

**Dr. Ponijani Liaw, Buddhist Subhasita,** shared personal interfaith experiences, having grown up in Muhammadiyah, then attending junior high school in a Catholic school. He went back to study in Muhammadiyah school where he was welcomed. He never experienced

any kind of discrimination while studying at Muhammadiyah. They did very well to promote inter-faith relationships. In senior high school, he studied Christianity but was irritated by a teacher spoke negatively about other religions. Since Buddhism was not available, he left to study Islam for nine years.

At university, he was taught by a Christian who did not speak negatively about other religions but rather about tolerance. His top scores in Christian studies led other students to protest. Buddhist teaching has three “baskets:” one governs the lives for Monks; a second governs the lives of lay people; and the third governs psychology and meta-physics of our lives. There are scriptures that talk about how to build relationship between different religions. One of them says that nobody can leave alone. We have to cooperate with one another in order to build a better world.



Dr. Ponijani Liaw, Buddhist Subhasita

*“Nobody can live alone. We have to cooperate with one another in order to build a better world.”*

-- Dr. Ponijani Liaw

*“I witnessed the work of Muhammadiyah and believe that it is one of the best organizations in the world. While in most Muslim countries, people suffer from limited access to effective contraceptives, Muhammadiyah organized a meeting in which 300 religious leaders attended with a group of medical doctors and discussed vasectomy. They proved that vasectomy is reversible and is not against God’s will. They challenged the argument that it is haram. Muhammadiyah approved vasectomy and integrated it in their programs and this revitalized the initiative.”*

-- Prof. Ahmed Ragab

### 5.3 The role of intra-faith and interfaith approaches in bridging the intergenerational gap

This session aimed to contribute to knowledge about determinants of intergenerational conflicts in Kenya.

*“If you haven’t been exposed to CRID, you can easily conclude that Kaya Elders are indeed witchdoctors. For me, it was challenging to go into the forest in Rabai and being asked to remove issues. I realized that we have to do this for the sake of interfaith work.”*

– Rev. Constantine Mbonabingi



Father Mbonabingi, Uganda, speaking on the role of Faith Leaders in Building Sustainable Peaceful Coexistence Through Universal Values

#### Top take-aways:

- There is need for capacity building of youth in religion and culture as well as mentorship to inculcate respect for the elderly people.
- There is need to promote family values.

**Patrick Miller**, Programs Manager, Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance (KMYA) explained that KMYA addresses inter-generational conflicts because young people are targeting the elderly and killing them so as to inherit land and property. They bring together stakeholders affected by conflict, to address emerging issues, such as:

- emergence of urban centers once perceive as rural, accompanied by internal and external migration, leading to the selling of land to buy motor bikes perceived to be better income generating alternatives compared with farming;
- modernization leading to increased awareness of liberties and rights; and
- misuse of some narratives and religious ideologies that associate African traditions with sorcery and witchcraft.

KMYA realized that the use of hard approaches (force, punishment) was not working, hence the need for soft approaches. They realized the need for value-based approach to be integrated with programming. They have mentored change agents and champions for the purpose of sustainability beyond the project.

**Sheikh Abu Hamza**, KMYA, explained that inter-generational conflicts are increasing, with Kisii County experiencing the latest killings. The fight against violent extremism leads to tensions between youth and the government. Conflicts also escalate due to the perception created by the religious leaders that African traditions practice sorcery. Poverty and unemployment



trigger young people to engage in violence because they want quick money.

**Asili Randani**, KMYA, explained that youth face pressure to engage in modern business, resorting to selling land so as to get money. Some receive handouts to participate in killing the elderly. There are also incidents of revenge killings. The traditional dressing of Kaya Elders puts them at more risk of killing because it is easy to identify them. Interventions have been through dialogue and community *barazas*.

KMYA has tried to work with the County government but the challenge is the expectation for money due to a perception that NGO have money. There have been peace agreements among conflicting parties but forgiveness, reconciliation and acceptance take long to realize. Women and men have been victims equally. Some people are accused of being witches not just because they have white hair, but also red eyes. Women leaders have been integrated in the project.



*A session on the Role of Interfaith and Interfaith Approaches in Bridging the Intergenerational*

## 5.4 Edutainment as a tool of interfaith peace

This session aimed to explore the role edutainment plays in the promotion of pluralism, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

### *Top take-aways:*

- Art has many forms and can be applied as a tool for communication depending on the context.
- The use of edutainment is involving and communities take part by providing solutions and also expounding on issues affecting them.
- Religious leaders and inter-faith approach have embraced the edutainment and the results are appealing
- Edutainment is not only for the youths, but cut across all ages.
- Edutainment helps to breakdown and simplify hard topics that often people shy away from discussing in public.
- The use of art communicates social issues, it connects to the hearts and this should be explored to help people in healing from trauma.

**Umar Nyanzi**, Executive Director, Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL) explained how edutainment can be used as a tool for interfaith peace. He emphasized that gender and youth inclusion can be achieved through edutainment. Where narratives and perceptions are used to divide people of different religions, education can help counter messages. Edutainment can also be a threat to peace if not handled well: for example, some folklore was used in Uganda to demean people of other faith/communities.

MCJL uses drama/skits and vernacular radio stations for outreach. Edutainment is not just for youth, but cut across for the entire population. The Bahai in South Africa use dance and drama to talk about social justice. Talking does not speak to one heart the way performing arts do. There is a connection between art, emotion and mind. In Palestine, there is no major conflict among different religions but some religious leaders use divisive statements. So, it is important to work with local tools that also help us create civil peace. Search for Common Ground (SFCG) uses Participatory Theatre for Change to role-play scenarios around different themes/issues in the society. In Ethiopia, art and music, and celebrities are helpful in uniting people.

**Rev. Constantine Mbonabingi**, Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), explained that communities embrace the connection of culture and religion. The UJCC used an Interfaith approach and edutainment were to reach people in the Yumbe region, which is 76% Muslim. The success of this work is attributed to working with religious leaders who are champions for family planning and child spacing. Transition through mentorship is key to ensure continuity of the work.

### 5.5 Welcoming the stranger: the role of the faith community and its leaders in promoting peace and inclusive societies.

This session aimed to unpack the concept of the Global Compact on Refugees and the role of faith communities and their leaders in promoting peace and inclusive societies. It sought to show and share best practices and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recommendations for global practice; facilitate

a collaboration among faith communities; and amplify voices of faith communities in international forums.

**Rev. Dr. Sivin Kit**, Program Executive for Public Theology and Inter-religious relations, Lutheran World Federation (LWF) presented a joint initiative with Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) in 2019 at the global refugee forum. HIAS, a Jewish American nonprofit organization that provides humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees, joined the initiative recently. The initiative highlights the efforts of local and national faith actors that contributes to a coordinated,

*“The challenges need to be stated by you so that we can make them known to the international community. Collection voice is very important.”*

-- Dr. Sivin Kit



Dr. Sivin Kit

effective and impactful international refugee response in a dynamic way. This helps ensure that voices of grass root champions and faith communities from all beliefs and denominations are heard.

The joint initiative affirms a historical initiative – Welcoming The Stranger affirmation by faith leaders – that was developed by UNCHR and recognizes that faith demands that we are all immigrants in this world, journeying together with hope. During this time of pandemic where there is so much hopelessness, people are thinking about climate and COVID, but it is important to not forget that conflict is still in the air and people are impacted and are on the move because of these different factors.

LWF, IRW and HIAS are doing this to support, encourage and walk alongside those who are doing this work, at local national and international levels because “you are walking the talk and we want to talk the walk” together with faith leaders and communities. The goal is to see an improved understanding of support for local and national faith actors who are engaged in protecting refugees and asylum seekers and migrants and provide more supportive environment so that we can all fulfill our calling. People are familiar with what is happening in Europe but there is more to hear from the Global South. The partners want to see increased solidarity and support for local efforts while connecting with international faith actors and NGOs. The initiative aims to show and share best practices for mutual learning, to collect the grass-root interfaith initiatives into a report and hear some recommendations for global practices to UNHCR, other partners and funders. It also seems to facilitate collaboration with various actors and to advocate and amplify local voices in international fora.

*“The stories from Moses and Youstina on welcoming the stranger are very inspirational. We rarely hear such stories in Geneva.”*

-- Kate Wiggans, UN Representative in Geneva, Islamic Relief Worldwide

Internally Displaced People (IDPs) do not have the same legal rights under the international law as refugees which only recognizes the rights of people who have crossed the international border. IDP concerns remain a question of sovereignty because it is the duty of a country to take care of citizens within its own country. UNHCR uses the term “displaced communities” for its own purposes because they are increasingly trying to scale up their responses to internally displaced communities and as well the refugee response. The UN General Secretary has created a high-level panel on internal displacements to look into some of the hugely sensitive and often toxic politics around the issues of sovereignty.

The initiative has been operating at a global level through interfaith approach with a long-term aspiration to scale up and work at different levels, such as national. There have been discussions for more on the ground country cooperation between different partners.

**Kate Wiggans**, Islamic Relief Worldwide UN Representative in Geneva, acknowledged that it has been a difficult year, but working with faith actors and faith-based organizations with

such graciousness, kindness, open hearts and such commitment is inspiring. The Welcoming the Stranger affirmation process started in 2013 following consultations with the High Commission for Refugees with faith-based organizations. In 2016 there was a conference in New York, that led to New York Declaration. This marked a shift within the humanitarian international community response to displacement away from the traditional method of putting refugees and displaced persons in refugee camps separate from the communities that are hosting and supporting them. It was recognized that even though refugee camps existed such as Dadaab, many displaced persons were living side by side with the communities that were hosting them. The New York declaration came up with “The Comprehensive Refugee Response framework” and with this framework the UNCHR and other actors started to move away from the camp setting to recognizing that humanitarian and relief work linked to displacement crisis need to be holistic and consider the needs and support of local

communities as well as support for those who have been displaced.

Building on the New York Declaration, the Global Compact on Refugees was designed not to replace the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol which are legally binding international laws framework for refugee rights. Instead the Global Compact reviews the laws and policies on refugees and displacement persons – broadening the support and sharing the burden of welcoming, helping and walking alongside the refugees. This follows the realization that this burden was being held by neighboring countries of conflict who receives the refugees and mostly in the global south.

The joint LWF-IRW-HIAS initiative is about fostering good relations and peaceful co-existence. This is relevant not only in crisis displacement contexts, but also in resettlement contexts and seeking opportunities for refugees.

*“The work of the Ibrahimia Media Centre is very helpful to us in Palestine, there is a lot we can learn from you, given our many years of living under occupation. Not all the time do refugees or asylum seekers cross borders. Sometimes we can see it inside our countries. We have refugees inside Palestine, inside West Bank and also outside of Palestine in Syria, Egypt and even in Europe. For us in Palestine, we see them every day.”*

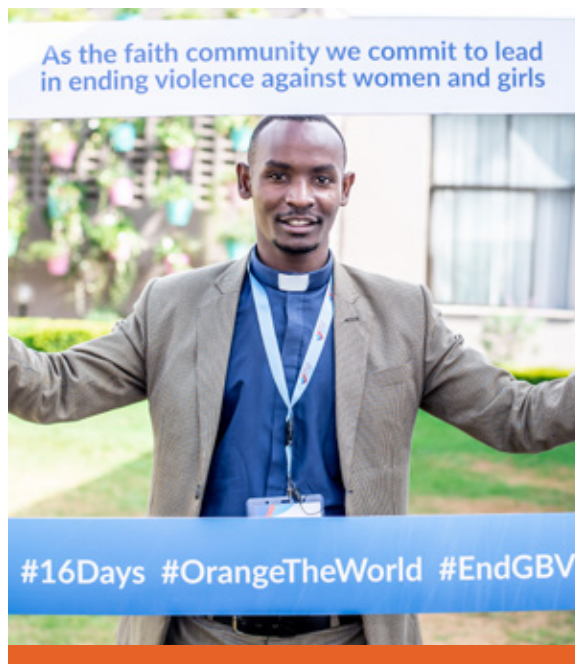
-- Judge Somoud al-Damiri



Judge Somoud al-Damiri

In fostering respect and understanding as well as combating discrimination, the Global Compact recognizes the power and positive impact of civil society actors, faith-based organizations and the media which will be harnessed. It also recognizes the role of faith communities and faith actors in the protection and assistance of refugees.

**Youstina Saed**, Project Manager, Ibrahimia Media Center (IMC), shared experiences of IMC in Egypt in *Welcoming the Stranger*, focusing on Arab society where many people are subjected to suffering as refugees. They promote peaceful co-existence and human rights through capacity building, creating common spaces, and awareness raising including human rights. The evolving crisis of refugees in the Arab region led to the urge to support brothers in humanity founded in the scripture (3 John 1:5, Hebrews 13:2). The FBO is considered to be most trusted sanctuary for refugees and strangers.



Moses Atuhaire, Executive Director - Western Uganda FBO Network (WUFBON)

**Moses Atuhaire**, Executive Director - Western Uganda FBO Network (WUFBON), explained that WUFBON is an interfaith network organization based in Western Uganda working with refugees and asylum seekers from DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Central Africa Republic, South Sudan and Kenya. They also work with internally displaced persons affected by floods. There are tensions in those locales due to the perceptions that the government and the international community has neglected the IDPs and are instead concentrating on those who have come from outside. In response to this situation, WUFBON started a program called “Welcome the Neighbor” in November 2019 to address the root causes of forced displacements, promoting peaceful co-existence and social cohesion. They looked into issues of gender-based violence and land ownership and land use.

The JISRA project also is addressing some of the issues encountered by refugees through a range of interventions such as sensitization on the rights of refugees.

## 5.6 Freedom of religion and belief: experiences from women of faith in Africa

Freedom of religion and belief (FORB) and gender equality intersect in many ways. FORB violations affect women differently from men, for example in relation to hidden violators, sexual violence, forced marriages, extreme social control and honor bearers. This session brought together different Women of Faith network experiences in looking at gender/women and advancing FORB. The session aimed to help participants come up with policy recommendations and a roadmap for enhancing FOR from a women’s perspective by the African Union and African States.

The session began with airing a [video clip](#) highlighting the experiences of the women of faith.

Ms. Shamsia Ramadhan guided the discussion by posing a series of questions to the panel consisting of four women:

- Nageeba Hassan - Uganda
- Shamsa Abubakar - Kenya
- Hailey Fudu – South Africa
- Halimat Jibril - Nigeria

#### *What is the Women of Faith Network?*



*Christina Maasdam, Mensen met een Missie, sharing her views during the session*

**Halimat Jibril** noted that the African Women of Faith network is an organization that came about as a result of the work of African Council of Religious Leaders and Religions for Peace. She noted that there were also youth networks that were also part of the network, and also the country level inter-religious councils. The Nigerian Women of Faith network, for instance, is part of NIREC. The need for the network arose as a result of the realities of their situations in their different countries. It was noted that women wielded a lot of power in their communities and families as well as having a lot of relevance in their countries. Besides, women faith leaders also have a lot of acceptability in their networks; which serve as a learning platform, exchange of ideas, and sharing of different lessons on the works, they do in their countries. She noted that the network has carried out interventions in the areas of gender equity, promoting peaceful coexistence, working with governments to promote peaceful coexistence, participating in law drafting, and serving as a source of solace to people who are displaced or who need help through their humanitarian services. The areas of intervention for the women of faith is inexhaustible. Their focus has largely been on socio-economic programs.

**Hailey Fudu** spoke on the essentiality of the network. The faith space is largely dominated by men, hence the need for women to equalize the space. She referenced scriptures from the Bahai religious texts. She noted that women are building an equal future hence the need for men and women to work together. Until women's capacities is fully realized, men too cannot realize their greatness. With increased capacities of both genders, it creates an equal and balanced society.

**Shamsia Ramadhan** explained that FoRB is not an area that is readily inviting for women. Yet, women still create a space in the sector where they have an opportunity to contribute to change in their society. That shows how to harness the voice and power of women.

#### *What issues do the women grapple with?*

**Shamsa Abubakar** noted that she has been a peace activist for 20 years, and she realized that peace and faith go hand in hand. She noted that if there was need for peace, a faith-based approach was necessary. She noted that in the course of her work, there have been numerous challenges. In spite of these challenges, she has continued to soldier on, and saw the need to spread the movement beyond the local level to the regional and global levels. This was echoed by Shamsia who noted the need to use challenges as a platform to grow.

**Nageeba Hassan** explained that each country has an inter-religious council that is run depending on the country. She provided an overview of the governing structure of each inter-religious council. She began her work in community engagement in which she took the opportunity to reach out to Muslims to join and take part in the programs. From there, she opted to volunteer in the faith spaces, where she worked with Muslim women. She also recognized one of the leaders from Uganda present in the convention who has been a champion of women inclusion in inter religious dialogue.

**Ms. Shamsia** highlighted the need to echo the stories and unique contributions of women in the faith movement and shared some of the important issues which were noted and highlighted during the consultation sessions:

- Teenage pregnancies and child marriages- Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria.
- Unequal economic and social opportunities for women- Kenya.
- Challenges of actualizing religious freedom.
- Lack of religious knowledge among women which make it difficult for women to engage in religious discourse.

She made an open call for the attendees to share some of the issues the women have undertaken:

**Nageeba Hassan** explained that it was challenging to formally register the Women of Faith Uganda as a formal institution where they could handle their own affairs and manage their own resources. Participation in policy frameworks such as the national action plan. They have also made a mark at the regional and global spaces.

**Shamsa Abubakar** recounted that Women of faith Mombasa has been recognized not only in Mombasa, but also globally, due to the work they have been doing. They have worked with reformed youth who have given up life of crime and transformed in to peace champions. Women face challenges, which impede their active involvement in decision making processes in their communities. For example, she mentioned the lack of representation of women in Kadhis courts.

**Hailey Fudu** noted that the women of faith South Africa was still growing. Women were critical in bringing the society together. They were creating a pilot program to support vulnerable women in the society. She noted that one of the significant problems in SA was that over 60 per cent of households are headed by

women. Women are able to endure, survive, and even provide spiritual nourishment for their families. She also mentioned that the unity among the women, because of the hardships, has been a positive influence in their work.

**Halimat Jibril** explained that cultural and Religious barriers compel women to play behind-the-scenes roles in many African contexts. She noted that the women had displayed their relevance, and the need to be consulted in issues of national relevance. She gave the example of her country, Nigeria, where international development partners look for the women to implement because the women have displayed competence, good will, knowledge of society, and sheer determination to have a better society. Women's organizations networks can do much to promote health, and to ensure that governments deliver on their mandates. She noted that diversity was not a weakness, but rather a strength.

*How are women attracted to the networks, and how they could appeal and reach out to other women who were marginalized?*

**Nageeba** explained that the interreligious councils at the national levels have coordinating committees consisting of women and youth, who will each get a seat on the board of the women of faith network. The executive committee would also nominate people from their religions to be part of the board.

**Halimat Jibril** responded that what matters is the base at the community/ micro level. The women had the structures up to that level, it was easier for them to impact, mobilize, and reach women up to base level.

**Shamsia** noted that women were present at all levels, especially where change happens.

*Is there any research available to support other aspects of society, and to define other key concepts?*

**Halimat Jibril** explained that one of their affiliates in Nigeria undertook research on divorce, which was informed by the rising cases of divorce among Muslims. She also noted that women of faith networks in different countries also need to assess and evaluate what needs research and evaluation, which would influence the development of programs and projects.

**Shamsa Abubakar** observed that despite many women being in possession of the necessary credentials and knowledge in Islamic law there is none who serves at the Kadhis Court. As a result, the women of faith network has collaborated with Advocacy for Women in Security and Peace in Africa, and Judicial Kadhis to advocate for inclusion of women in the Kadhis Courts. However, there is still need for wider research to outline theological and philosophical arguments to support this. She noted that divorced cases affected women and children. She highlighted that women needed to fight for their space in the Kadhis court to solve these issues.

#### *Way forward*

An appraisal of the convention came up with the following steps as a way forward.

- Mapping of partners and development of advocacy strategy
- Training on FoRB, advocacy skills, and mediation skills



- Documenting stories of the journey of each Women of Faith
- Connecting through physical visits and virtually
- Research of issues of FoRB and women's rights
- Follow up on lobby and advocacy with AU and regional bodies
- Make a calendar of events
- Hold one advocacy meeting in January 2022;
- Hold one general consultation meeting in January 2022; and
- Dispatch the aide memoir to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union.

### 5.7 Alternative theological narratives that support pluralism, understanding, tolerance and respect to counter radicalization and violent extremism

To achieve the above, the following activities were planned:

- A poll to be shared with the women Religious Leaders to assist in discerning priority areas for perusal;
- Conduct country level consultations to generate individual and collective work plans;

This session aimed to explore the alternative theological narratives which promote understanding, tolerance and respect for pluralism, violent radicalization and religious extremism.



Women of Faith presenting an aide memoir containing policy recommendations for the advancement of FoRB and Women's rights at regional and national levels

*“Religion has to be from the heart, in the way we pray, in the way we live, pray to God as if you are seeing, you don’t have to fear God they you fear a lion; rather it is an expression of love to God.”*

-- Dr. Abdkadir Hashim

#### **Top take-aways:**

- Religions ought to play a central role in providing solidarity and peace in communities, rather than serving as sources of conflict in the world.
- There is need to shift from inter-faith dialogue to inter-faith engagement. It is through the engagement of other people that God speaks.
- We must avoid radicalized ideologies and provide alternative narratives without leaving people guessing.
- Extremists control groups and target recruits with limited religious knowledge.
- Extremists recruit their supporters through the power of persuasion and financial manipulation, promising them Jannah (paradise).
- Radicalization does not occur overnight, it entails a gradual process of indoctrination.
- There is need to address the same issues extremists speak about and challenge those misleading theologies from a sound and sober interpretation of relevant scriptural texts.

**Dr. Abdkadir Hashim**, Senior Lecturer, University of Nairobi and Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, explained that narratives are usually based on strong emotional and religious appeal. They use the power of persuasion and financial manipulation to recruit people while promising Jannah (paradise). The Prophet Muhammad is an exemplary role model to Muslims because he embraced and lived among people of different religions. The Prophet lived amongst Christians, Jews and pagans and did not kill them because they were Kuffar (infidels). He signed a treaty with the Christians of Najran. Jihad is a concept which is misunderstood and misused. Jihad means “to struggle”, “to exert effort” or “to strive”. Performing emigration (hijra) to the land of jihad is an individual obligation (wajib ‘ayni) for all Muslims. Hijra is only considered in cases of fear of persecution.

Extremists propagate the wrong notion that the relationship between Muslims and people from other faiths is war, not peace. People, regardless of their faith, always possess the right to live in peace and security. Prophet Muhammad established one Ummah (community) composed of all the people of Medina. (Global Islamic Community). The Quran permits freedom of belief for all of mankind.

*“The Spirit of Islam is always to do good and not to punish.”*

-- Sheik Mbacke.

Religion has been misused and manipulated. Theology is a human construct of a revealed message which is subject to manipulation to suit human interest. Extremism is a fabrication used to suit the interests of the ruling family. The struggle is how to deconstruct what the extremist narratives say about religion. But we also need to understand that Sharia is Law and Law cannot be touched.

*“On the Issue of extremism, how do we separate the mindset of the individual with what religion is saying because quite often it is not the teaching of religion rather is just an individual who just decides to become an extremist. Religion teaches moderation and modest”.*

-- Hamza, Nigeria

The dynamics of radicalization are very complex and include manipulation in terms of religion, politics – driven by political motives they might not be aware of. We need to understand that it is not religion but is something else. The issue of the state and extremism is due to lack of trust and we need to look into ways for the state to engage religious leaders to build more trust and confidence.

We need to understand that the process of radicalization does not happen overnight. The mindset change cannot happen instantly, it is taken through stages and perhaps we need to do more than we are doing in order to change the mindsets of the youths.



Rev. Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu Chikelue, Nigeria, expressing her views during the session

**Dr. Munyao**, Department of Peace and International Studies, Daystar University, explained that narrative is a unifying well organized, well explained story that serves as a basis for understanding events. We are not focusing on counter-narratives because these argue against the very dimension of the extremist narratives, which is not our focus. Alternative narratives undercut the violent extremist narratives and focus on what we stand for.

Faith has been exploited through exclusivity, expansionism, dominion and prosperity (twentieth century Christo-capitalism – riding on the person of Christ, for profit), self-preservation, and the issue of honor & shame – we are honored when we are respected, we are shameful when we lose ground. There are Inter-faith and gender aspects that demean and marginalize others (e.g. Muslims are bad, contestation between Isaac and Ismael, where Isaac is compared to the spirit which will live and Ismael is compared with the flesh which will die) and counter jihad teachings that lack knowledge and experience. There are examples

where gender aspects is taken out of context such as patriarchy in religion – tends to relegate the female gender lower than the male and misunderstanding about gender roles including even in the church.

Alternative narratives affirm that we have One God, creator of all and that we serve one God and that all humanity is created in the image of God. It is not about gender, rather it has reference to those transmissible characteristics which God shares with us including righteousness, love, faithfulness truth, mercy compassion. When such characteristics are practiced within a pluralistic community, they reflect the very nature of God, hence providing us with shalom, so we have peace if we have this understanding.

We should shift from interfaith dialogue, because dialoguing sometimes gets heated and at times counter-productive. Instead we should embrace interfaith engagement, that encourages conversations of the well, where we have things that pulls together. We need to ask ourselves what are our modern-day wells? What are those things that bring us together and how can we encourage interfaith discourses at that point to build resilience?

For community peace initiatives, all humanity is against evil. We need to realize that all acts of terrorism hurt everyone, they do not favor any faith.

Dr Munyao shared the Cape Town Commitment from the centenary gathering of Evangelicals that met in South Africa in 2010 as follows: Love your neighbor as yourself (includes person of other faiths); rejection of any form of witness that is coercive, unethical, deceptive and

disrespectful; repentance from failure to seek friendship with people of other faiths; refusal to promote lies and caricatures about other faiths; rejection of the paths of violence and revenge even when violently attacked.

Indoctrination is the pathway to radicalization. It was not the intention of the fore fathers of faith to indoctrinate. They were basically about living the life of Jesus. The people who first called them Christians were non-believers. It was nothing of compulsion and it was the same model in the Old Testament. The example of the expansionist theory was because the motive was to conquer and this is what we are seeking to redress so that we look at Christian faith not in the light of conquering people.

The antidote to radicalization nuances is offering alternative ways of both understanding and perceiving scripture, the interpretation of scripture itself and its application in real life situations. We must avoid playing around with radicalized ideologies and call them explicitly for what they are. We must dismiss them boldly but also provide alternatives.

*“We are thieves, we are misusing the Bible and the Quran to collect money from people. We need to go back to school so that we can help people to understand the meaning of the Quran and the Bible. Otherwise we are capitalizing on the weaknesses of the people.”*

-- Rev. Constantine Mbonabingi

There is chemistry between people from other faiths the moment they realize that they are interested in learning about the other's faith. People no longer fear about guarding one's faith against being polluted by the other and express a readiness to engage on things that are common. This requires a level of maturity.

Participant **Peter Munene** observed that Isaac and Ishmael are all descendent from Abraham. When the mother of Ismael went to the desert and could not get water, the God who provided water is the same God who remained with Isaac. But it has been portrayed as if God only remained with Isaac and that the offspring of Ismael were condemned. The nature of God in the Bible is three in one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Who amongst these three persons stands prominently than the other? There are a lot of things that theology has not helped people to understand. When we look at the practices of other faiths, we are quick to condemn that they worship idols without appreciating multicentricity in the way people worship. The so-called idols could be a people's representation of their God, just in the same way Christians value the cross as a symbol for Jesus.

MYA uses learning circles, where they take Muslim youth to the church and vice versa. This helps to clarify some stereotypes and misconceptions. We should enhance such exchange visits with a view to seeking to understand the other.

As observed by participant **Sheikh Mbacke**, theological dialogue is not important for us Africans, it should just stay at the scholarly level and focus on what we are calling dialogue of works (over the wells). Dialogue is more important when people have an issue to

solve. In any case, religion has never been a problem for us in Africa. We have always lived in harmony. Do we define ourselves as African Muslims or Muslim Africans, or African Christians/Christian Africans? In other words, identity is very important. Many challenges we face have nothing to do with religion; religion is the result of manipulation and this is because of our problems – poverty, resources etc.



Group discussion under a tree

## 6.0 Other sessions

Four sessions tackled other topics of importance to the Faith to Action Network priorities.

### 6.1 Faith to Action Network Strategic Plan

In the past few years, the Faith to Action Network has grown from 41-member organizations to 110-member organizations. Collectively, our constructive voice has reached millions of community members and many decision makers. The secretariat has grown from 5 staff to 14 staff, from active projects in 5 countries to 9 countries, and from Euro 20,000 to Euro 1.6 million in annual income. It is time to develop a new Strategic Plan that better reflects our current reality and establishes ambitions appropriate for the coming five years. This session aimed to review the strategic plan of Faith to Action Network for the year 2022 – 2027. Sessions participants were highly motivated on the topic and readily contributed their perspectives.

**Karen Hoehn**, Director Bonstar, SRL and Senior Advocacy Advisor to the Faith to Action Network, explained findings from a consultative survey and interviews that have been conducted to inform the next Network Strategic Plan. Breakout groups then provided concrete input regarding: What in the world need to change – that F2A can impact – over the next 5 years? What is the most important thing that F2A should do in 2022? What warnings / caution would you advise the F2A Network for its next 5 year strategy? What unique value does the F2A Network provide that is unlike any other organization? One breakout group was tasked

with drafting one goal that the F2A Network could include in its next Strategic Plan.

#### Top take-aways from the session

- There was a running call to prioritize strengthening F2A as a membership organization, network, secretariat, programming and advocacy at national, regional and international levels.
- The Network is urged to continue striving to be more inclusive, sensitive and understanding in expanding regional programming, strengthening the interfaith approach and cultural diversity.



*Karen Hoehn, Director of Bonstar SRL, taking the participants through a session on 2022-2027 strategic plan*

- Suggestions on new programming areas were given, like climate justice, working more with sexual minorities, working with young people, working on various conflicts and emergencies including Covid-19 and social media influencing. The final strategic plan should be shared to all members, partners and associates to enable them understand why and how the 5 year priorities were arrived at.

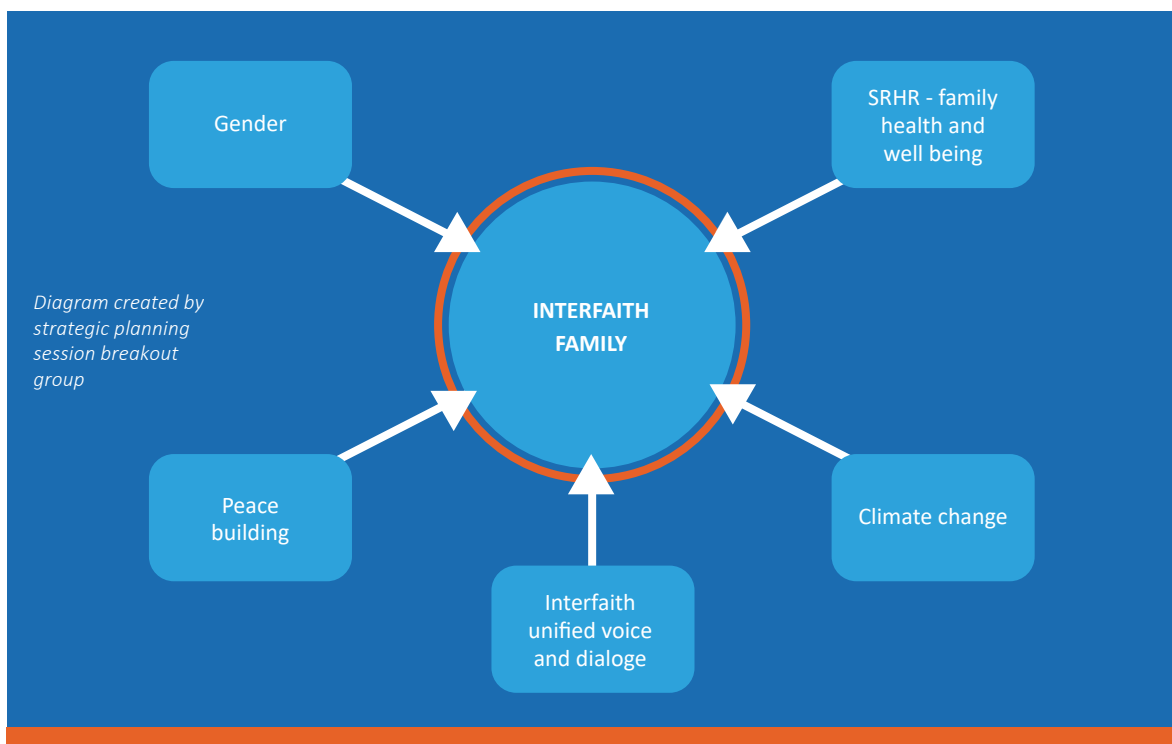
Participants observed that the Network provides unique value through its interfaith

dialogue on social issues with a specific thematic focus; its democratic engagement of a wide variety of stakeholders and across faiths; success in creating safe spaces and trust for intra- and interfaith actors; its reach spanning from grassroots to national dialogues; its understanding that faith actors cannot and should not be left out of conversations (persistence); and its strength as an interfaith network of religious leaders from all religions able to influence policies at national, regional and international levels.



*Group work on strategizing for a constructive faith voice in global advocacy spaces*





## 6.2 Faith engagement in policy and decision-making spaces with regional economic communities, African Union and other agencies: experiences, challenges and opportunities

This plenary session aimed to share the faith community’s peacebuilding, gender justice and SRHR interventions within fragile situations; share experiences, challenges and opportunities in engaging the faith community in regional and global decision and policy making processes; identify opportunities and strategies to expand the space for engagement with the faith in peacebuilding, gender justice and SRHR interventions, decision and policy making; and present faith recommendations to the African Union Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AU WGDD),

Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on engagement with the faith in peacebuilding, gender justice and SRHR interventions, decision and policy making.

### Top take-aways:

- Conflicts in different places are not the same, and so modalities for addressing them should also be different. Among other things, religious adherence varies from place to place, which merits attention during engagement.
- Engaging with regional/economic bodies – such as IGAD and SADC – provides opportunities to influence policies and practices on priority issues.
- IGAD is ready to build the capacity of women mediators and include them in their mediation roster.

**Dr. Aleu Garang** explained that IGAD engages faith-based groups in track II mediation in peace-building efforts. They count on faith-based institutions as partners to lead truth, forgiveness and healing because Faith based institutions are considered in driving the reconciliation agenda. The IGAD Mediation Process focuses on preventive diplomacy and mediation and is inclusive of all stakeholders: Women in Peace and Security, Youth in Peace and Security and Civil Society Groups.

IGAD's experience with faith-based institutions is informed by the second Revitalization Agreement on Resolution of Conflict for South Sudan (ARCSS) 2018. Some challenges encountered include the tendency of contradiction between faith-based institutions (Christians vs. Islam = forum shopping), competition among faith based-institutions makes and imperiality and challenge of being perceived to take side. Opportunities to leverage include the fact that Faith-based institutions are organized and often respected, the realization that complementarity and coordination of roles on mediation processes deliver more genuine peace-making processes and the comparative advantage of faith actors.

For IGAD, there are two rosters where women faith actors can engage to increase the capacity of women mediators. A formal letter can be addressed through the IGAD secretariat for consideration. IGAD will then work with other partners such as Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FEMWISE). The only limitation is that this is limited to IGAD region.

## IGAD REGION

### Horn of Africa



**Djibouti** (founding member, since 1986)



**Ethiopia** (founding member, since 1986)



**Somalia** (founding member, since 1986)



**Eritrea** (admitted 1993, withdrew 2007, readmitted 2011)<sup>[1]</sup>

### Nile Valley



**Sudan** (founding member, since 1986)



**South Sudan** (admitted 2011,<sup>[2]</sup> suspended December 2021<sup>[3]</sup>)

### African Great Lakes



**Kenya** (founding member, since 1986)



**Uganda** (founding member, since 1986)

**Jeanetette Uwizeye**, Executive Director, FECCLAHA, explained that their engagement is guided by the three pillars of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: participation, prevention and protection. They engage through the regional Faith Women Mediation Network, whose establishment was in recognition of the strategic place of women in the faith community. Structured enhancement is sustained through training, mentorship and exchange programs. They use theological reflections to address issues on GBV and barriers for participation and prevention.

FECCLAHA has strengthened networking for advocacy and policy influencing that includes partnerships, participating in various regional processes through IGAD, FEMWISE Africa and the African Union. They also provide regional accompaniment to national peace processes by grassroots women. They also contribute to other policies and practices on issues of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and human rights.



*Jeanetette Uwizeye, Executive Director, FECCLAHA,*

The manufacture of small arms is a very sensitive issue, and the hardest topic to deal with. FECCLAHA works with the Regional Centre for Small Arms (RECSA). They believe that for faith communities to engage they need information. This is an area that requires collective effort to ensure that there are laws in place. But there is also the challenges of alternative livelihoods where acquiring SALW is for economic gain.

**Jabulile Malaza**, Research Director and Desk Officer for the Southern Africa Development Community at the Swaziland Parliament, spoke about their efforts to ensure the domestication of Parliamentary Forum model laws among the member states of SADC on thematic areas including GBV, early pregnancy, access to services, pregnancy termination/abortion and comprehensive sexuality education. They work through technical working groups, and



*Jabulile Malaza, Research Director and Desk Officer for the Southern Africa Development Community at the Swaziland Parliament*

these include faith actors. SADC has a positive intervention forum, but the legal structures are not in place for structured formalized way of engaging faith actors in regional organizations/ platforms.

### 6.3 Faith to Action Network hub system planning

This closed session was designed to create awareness of the hub system so that the members can play their part to make it a success. It aimed to promote the hub system as a framework for interfaith collaboration, to present the hub Strategy and to reflect and celebrate opportunities realized by focal persons and their institutions having being part of the hubs. The session took the form of an open dialogue among participants to share perspectives and make recommendations on next steps.

Faith to Action Network has started rolling out a hub system to enhance faith organizations' collective power by collaborating within and across geographical borders. The overall objective is to establish safe spaces where faith organizations coordinate collective action, encourage a culture of interfaith engagement, and leverage collective social capital in areas faith communities grapple with.

When the Network started in 2011, many stakeholders wondered whether the faith community can be included in decision making spaces. The network gradually claimed spaces, at global, regional and national level. By now, Faith to Action Network has increasing opportunities in advocacy, capacity building, communications, networking, resources, and research.

The secretariat has understood that it is difficult to engage with all the members continuously. In order to respond to all opportunities, the Network has started rolling out a hub system, with focal points in each country.

Participant sharing can be summarized into seven key areas.

- 1. Clarify Terms of Reference.** The Network can improve clarity on the purpose of the hubs, with a clear code of conduct and guidelines on how to work. A more structured approach could include guidelines for titles for the hub structure, such as Structure of the hub; Selection and engagement; Moderation and management; and Cooperation.
- 2. Membership management.** Participants indicated that it would be helpful to develop a director of member organizations with contact persons and focal points.
- 3. Communications.** Participants requested enhanced sharing of resources among member organizations; development of specific profiles for each member organization in the network with photo, logo, name and other information; and an updated website.
- 4. Added-value of hosting a hub.** Hosting a hub is helpful as it increases opportunities at the national level. The hub has played an important role in advocating for an East African SRHR bill. It allowed bring in more faith actors. It is an opportunity to include more people, understand what other people are doing and grow the network. We have coordinated well, between the focal point and the secretariat. It was easy to mobilize people. We got people involved who would have not come without the Faith to Action Network affiliation. The hub system has helped us during the EALA SRHR consultations. It helped us cover the whole country, with representation from East,

North, West and Central Uganda. Activities have attracted many faith institutions from South Sudan: they want to be members, get a mandate to implement programs in their localities.

- 5. Supporting structures. In Uganda, it's not possible to move to all parts of the countries.** In order to keep in close contact with faith organizations across the country, WUFBON identified and worked with allies in all geographic locations. Faith to Action Network invited institutions to be a host for the hub system. Each institution mandated a person. Internally, the focal person is briefed about the hub. An internal feedback system has been established for the KMYA team, informing them, informing them in hub meetings with the support of different team members. Participants asked: In addition to focal points, what other structures do we put in place to assist the hub? There is a mandate with ToRs for the focal point, do we need more supporting structures?
- 6. Strategic direction.** Many faith actors from within and outside the network are interested. Participants asked How can we invite faith actors to join the hub? How effective will it be? Do we expand it continuously (quantity) or do we focus on specific areas? Ideas: we need working groups on different topics.
- 7. Initiating national-level dynamics.** Participants want to take advantage of opportunities in the country. These opportunities don't need to emanate from the Network secretariat level. This also gives opportunities for resource mobilization. For example, the concept of a hub system was replicated in Western Uganda, with funding from a donor. Some hold a vision of a national coordination office in Uganda, like Faith to Action Network branch in Uganda. Participants expressed a We need to develop country work plans looking beyond what is available at the secretariat level to what the hub can do within a 1-year period, within each own hub context.

Faith to Action Network introduced the existing hub Terms of Reference, which will be shared with all participants.

Participants discussed how to enable the sustainability of the hub system. They proposed a phased approach.

#### Short-term:

- Set short-term specific goals for each hub. While in the formation stage, quarterly objectives should be reasonable. A first objective could be to assess the membership (active / inactive / areas of interest).
- Hubs need a good orientation program for host organizations and also for new members that orient members on Terms of Reference and clear guidelines about respect of principles and values.
- Being part of the hub must be formalized.
- Hosting organizations need capacity-enhancement for effective network hosting.
- Hub activities can be organized for members to engage frequently.
- Clarify selection and engagement of new members: as a risk mitigation strategy, needs an assessment and validation of becoming a member living up to Network principles.
- Member information should be assessed for accuracy and up-to-date-ness.
- Develop a newsletter for everybody.
- In the beginning, resources are needed to implement activities to mobilize faith organizations. Bishop has offered guest house and hall, but there are costs.

- For host organizations which have a project, some budgets may be allocated to communications, and also strategically use project activities.

**Mid term:**

- Develop hub workplans.
- Organize country based annual meetings.
- Invite secretariat to join country based activities.

**Long term:**

- Introduce small membership fees, with very clear membership benefits (trainings, annual general assembly).

Participants agreed on the following next steps:

- Faith to Action Network secretariat will share the minutes of the meeting, and will identify follow up actions and timelines,
  - Follow-up actions includes - Terms of reference: Add: screening new members, have a clear methodology,
  - Identify regional meetings to support hub formation,

- The secretariat will organise quarterly follow-up meetings,
- Host organizations that implement F2A project can propose to re-allocate budgets to communications.

The Network secretariat will take this input into account when developing the hub system.

### 6.4 Closing plenary: Diversity and Inclusion: From Rhetoric to Collective Faith Action

The closing plenary of the convention was designed to encourage reflection among participants, and encourage them to apply and integrate the learnings to their personal context. It aimed to trigger a personal reflection process on how to apply the know-how exchanged during the conference, by listening to the Convention Statement and call to action; reflect on one’s personal and institutional actions regarding diversity and inclusion; and gain inspiration from three speakers who will share how they have moved from “rhetoric to collective faith action”.



*Prof. H. Abdul Mu'ti, Muhammadiyah, Indonesia, during closing plenary*

## NAMES OF SPEAKERS

**Dr Nontando Hadebe**, International Coordinator, Side by Side;

**Prof. H. Abdul Mu'ti**, Muhammadiyah, Indonesia;

**Judge Somoud al-Damiri**, Head of the Sharia Prosecution for the Upper Council of Sharia Courts, and judge of the Sharia Court of Appeal in Palestine;

**Facilitated by Karen Hoehn**, Board Member of Faith to Action Network

**Diversity** is about the reality of differences among people. Differences are the treasure that enable us to work together, and contribute according to our different beliefs, skills and talents. By harnessing each other's differences, this enriches everybody. Hence, because we are different, this makes us strong. The Indonesian term "unity in diversity" embodies this strength that derives from diversity. However, very often diversity is not seen as a gift, but constructed as a source of fear and threat. Often, features of diversity such as race and ethnicity, gender, ability, religion, result in inequality. Inequalities are deeply engrained in laws, practices and structures, resulting in people's marginalization from civic spaces and from services.

**Inclusion:** It is crucial to acknowledge these differences and related structural inequalities, so that no one is left behind in our work. All religions teach about the respect for each other. From this respect, arises the responsibility to accept and include every individual, regardless of their differences in religion, races, sexes,

ethnicities, and other kind of differences. This responsibility of working together is aimed at creating a better prosperous world. The underlying requirement for such a peaceful coexistence of all people is sincere acceptance of others. Instead of consciously or unconsciously excluding people, we must include them.

**Challenges** related to religion include the politization of religion, the manipulation of religion to bolster patriarchy, the vilification of African culture, extremism and exclusion.

**Change is possible** among faith actors, but for this to happen, we need to start by building trust with religious leaders, before opening a dialogue for re-interpretations of holy texts. This includes clarifying the texts by referring to religious frameworks and arguments, while drawing on scientific evidence. Offering people from different background spaces to interact, exposes them to new ideas, and sensitizes them for our common responsibility to work for a common good. It creates their awareness that despite their differences, they breathe the same air, drink the same water and live on the same land.

**Examples on how to move from rhetoric to action** include Prof Abdul Mu'ti's account of faith communities' common approaches to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia; Judge Somoud al-Damiri's advocacy for legal reform in Palestine; and Dr Nontando Hadebe's theological work to reinterpret holy texts that have bolstered patriarchy within Christianity.

### Call to actions included:

- increase personal engagement with others to exchange diverse world views and understand each other's needs.

- Increase institutional engagements and partnerships.
- be more friendly, more personally engaged
- don't leave anyone behind
- Be cautious of language, review and reinterpret words
- Invest in education
- reach out to other like-minded people and encourage them to join us
- join the movement, deepen and continue their work, documenting their actions

The closing plenary began with a panel discussion featuring the following speakers:

- Dr Nontando Hadebe is a feminist woman theologian, currently International Coordinator of Side by Side. She is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians as well as Catholic Women Speak. She hosts a weekly radio program on Radio Veritas.
- Prof. H. Abdul Mu'ti has served as General Secretary of the Central Leadership Board, Muhammadiyah since 2010. With 29 million individual members, Muhammadiyah is an Indonesian reformist movement. Prof Mu'ti actively promotes interfaith dialogues and cooperation in Indonesia and abroad.
- Judge Somoud al-Damiri is the first female appointed as the Head of the Sharia Prosecution for the Upper Council of Sharia Courts, and the first female judge of the Sharia Court of Appeal in Palestine. She has been awarded the Integrity award in 2010. She studied Law and Contemporary Islamic Studies and is currently studying theology. She is a valuable member of many committees such as the national team of CEDAW committee, the National Team for Gender Equality, the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence, and more.

Speakers unpacked the conference theme, "Diversity and Inclusion: From Rhetoric to Collective Faith Action," and explained it from their perspective.

**Dr Nontando Hadebe** started by defining diversity, which is about the reality of differences among people. The problem is how difference is understood. Very often diversity is not seen as a gift, but constructed as a source of fear and threat. The world has been destroyed by the way difference is constructed as inequality – inequality between races, inequality between genders, inequality between abled and differently abled people. She reminded participants of intersecting identities, for example, women with disabilities, from a different class, race, ethnicity, religion and denomination. When diversity is not clearly acknowledged, there's exclusion, which results in violence.



*Dr Nontando Hadebe, International Coordinator, Side by Side, as she introduces herself to the participants during the plenary session*



acknowledge these differences, so that no one is left behind. So, the opposite of exclusion is inclusion. In practice, we must make inclusion our culture. People should be speaking for themselves. Nothing about anybody, without their presence. She asked participants to think who is excluded from their table? How many women with disability are at their table? How many women with different sexualities are at their table? How many from different ethnic groups? In order for inclusion to become a reality, we need to create welcoming spaces.

**Judge Somoud al-Damiri** reflected on the meaning of diversity and inclusion within the context of the Palestinian judiciary system. Palestine's population is mainly Muslim with small Christian and Jewish minorities. When interrogating the policies, strategies and plans, the meanings of diversity are not well reflected.

So, she says it is important to look at the Sharia judiciary system's practice. She gave three examples.

1. Inclusion within employment practices: She explained that Sharia court judges must be Muslim, but there's no restrictions regarding other types of employees who can belong to different religious groups. Yet, in practice, when vacancies are published, Christian candidates don't apply. While there aren't legal barriers for their employment, people's personal fears prevent them from applying.
2. Judges as communicators of peace: The Sharia judges play an important role. As religious leaders and judges, they disseminate messages of civil peace. They sit at the same table with Christian and Samaritan faith leaders and judges to share the same discourse on all issues.
3. Regulating lawyers: The head of Sharia Courts is in charge of a special committee that regulates the lawyers at Sharia courts.

Any Muslim, Christian or Jewish lawyer can have a license to be a lawyer in front a Sharia Court.

Therefore, when returning back home: Judge Somoud will see how to address practices and structures, and reflect on how inclusion can be enhanced.

**Prof Abdul Mu'ti** emphasized that being different doesn't mean we need to be indifferent. He said that the world belonged to everybody, regardless of their differences. Differences are the treasure that enable us to work together, and contribute according to our different beliefs, skills and talents. By harnessing each other's differences, this will enrich everybody. Hence, because we are different, this makes us strong. Hence, in Indonesia, there's a term that calls on "unity in diversity".

All religions teach about the respect for each other. From this respect, arises the responsibility to accept and include every individual, regardless of their differences in religion, races, sexes, ethnicities, and other kind of differences. This responsibility of working together is aimed at creating a better prosperous world. The underlying requirement for such a peaceful coexistence of all people is sincere acceptance of others.

Prof Abdul Mu'ti called on all to strengthen our partnerships.



Faith to Action Network staff leading a dance during the social event

## Annex: Photos



Faith to Action Network Press Conference



Faith to Action Network Press Conference



Religion for Peace South Africa hands over their membership form to Faith to Action network CEO



The interfaith Statement was read to the delegates on the last day



Participants from South Africa having a dance during the social event held on Day 1



The delegates committed to be the light of the world as they shared a candle lighting moment



Group interaction during poster presentation session



Our members from Bahai community commit to ending violence against women and girls



*Dr Christina de Vries Cordaid (left), Stephanie Joubert , Mensen Met een Missie, Peter Munene, CEO, Faith to Action Network, Christina Maasdam, Mensen Met een Missie (right)*



*Sipping a cup of tea is a great starter of every great conversation; steering committee member, Rev. Canon Kaiso (right) with Faith to Action Partners from Muslim Centre for Justice and Uganda Joint Christian*



*Networking and exchanging ideas during the sessions was received with open arms*



*Note taking is one way to ensure that you keep a record of things heard; participants keenly jotting down notes during a session*





*Delegates networking was key*



*When the faith community meets, photos are ought to be taken*

## Annex: About the Conference Organizers

This convention was organized by Faith to Action Network, in collaboration with Mensen met een Missie, World YWCA and ACT Ubumbano who significantly contributed to the conference programme and participation.



**ACT UBUMBANO**

The following organisations organized convention sessions and spoke on panel discussions

**African Council of Religious Leaders**  
*Religions for Peace*

**actalliance**





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## Annex: Speakers Biographies



### **Rev. Canon Grace Kaiso**

Rev. Canon Grace Kaiso is a theologian and an ordained minister in the Anglican Church trained in Uganda, New Zealand and Canada. Since his ordination in 1977 he has served in the Church in different capacities and at different levels. Rev. Kaiso served for 9 years as the Executive Secretary of the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), an ecumenical body that brings together the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. He has worked with World Vision International as Project Manager and Facilitator of urban projects for 10 years where he was actively involved in issues of urban ministry with special focus on empowerment of the poor.

Rev. Canon Kaiso's approach to social justice issues is informed by his faith in Christ and theological training, his passion for building harmonious and dignified communities, and also by his practical experience of engagement with diverse governance structures, the urban poor and minority groups.

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### **Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ragab**

Dr. Ahmed Ragaa A. Ragab is a professor of reproductive health at the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University. He is the Vice Chairman of Faith to Action Network. He is holding three master degrees (OB/GYN, population and bioethics) and a Ph.D, reproductive health. He was awarded the National High Academy of Scientific Research Family Planning Award, 2004. Egyptian medical syndicate awarded him its annual award for his work in the area of promoting the health of women in 2006.

He has extensive record of research and books addressing family planning, reproductive health and gender issues from faith perspectives.

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### **Prof. Dr. Emma Rachmawati**

Dr. Emma Rachmawati, is a Public Health Coordinator, General Health Advisory Council - Central Board of Muhammadiyah Organization, Indonesia. She is a lecturer at the Faculty of Health Sciences and has served two terms as its Dean between 2011-2018.

Dr. Rachmawati is currently also serving as national head of ethical clearance at the health research commission. She is also coordinator at the triple elimination (hiv-aids, syphilis and hepatitis b) partnership program.

She serves as a Member of Steering Council, Faith to Action Network. In Muhammadiyah Organization, she serves as a Public Health Coordinator for the General Health Advisory Council, Central Board. She is also responsible

for Partnership Program since 2011 in public health programs such as health promoting hospital and reproductive health at Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding Schools.

She is currently Coordinator of Public Health and Education Division, Muhammadiyah Covid-19 Command Center (MCCC)

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**Dr. Douglas Huber**

Dr. Douglas Huber is a physician and public health expert who has provided leadership for large-scale maternal and child health programs in 41 countries. For more than 30 years, Dr. Huber has held senior positions in international health organizations. He has led innovations that have significantly increased contraceptive prevalence in varied settings, including successful community-based programs in Bangladesh and Afghanistan that served as models for national scale-up of family planning services.

Dr. Huber served on the expert international committees for the World Health Organization and the International Planned Parenthood Federation that produced the Global Handbook for Family Planning Providers and newly developed guidelines for community health workers. As co-chair of the Family Planning/Reproductive Health working group of Christian Connections for International Health, he works closely with leaders in Christian health associations and Islamic health networks in Africa. He also served as the HIV/AIDS advisor to the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa from 2002-2004. He is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and a Fellow of the American College of Preventing Medicine.

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**Dr. Nontando Hadebe**

Dr Nontando Hadebe is a lay Christian theologian from Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. She currently coordinates Side by Side, a movement of faith actors which are committed to removing barriers to gender justice. Dr Nontando holds a doctorate in theology from St Augustine College of South Africa, where she researched on a Trinitarian theological response to gender challenges in the context of HIV/Aids in Southern Africa.

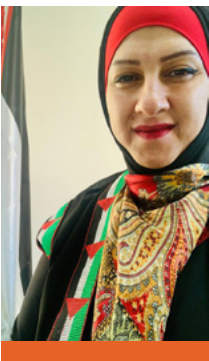
She is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians as well as the TCCRSA Women’s Caucus comprising catholic women theologians in Africa. Raised as a Catholic, her spiritual journey subsequently took her to the Baptist and Anglican/Lutheran churches, and thence back to the Catholic Church. A common feature is that all the churches sent her to study theology, giving her a comprehensive theological education that includes Evangelical, Liberal protestant and Catholic theologies. Her theological interests are informed by principles of human dignity, diversity, difference, equality and justice as foundational to liberation theologies that dismantle and replace multiple systems of oppression that have been normalized in society such as patriarchy, sexism and homophobia.



### **Prof. H. Abdul Mu'ti**

Prof. H. Abdul Mu'ti has served as General Secretary of the Central Leadership Board, Muhammadiyah since 2010. With 29 million individual members, Muhammadiyah is an Indonesian reformist movement, advocating ijtihad - individual interpretation of Qur'an and Sunnah. The movement promotes religious tolerance in Indonesia, and manages thousands of health centres and 128 universities. Prof Mu'ti is a Muhammadiyah activist since 1994 and was the General Chairman of Muhammadiyah Youth (Pemuda Muhammadiyah) from 2002 to 2006. He holds a PhD from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. His major research is on education and religious pluralism, and he teaches at the Faculty of Systematic Religious Teaching and Development. Prof Mu'ti actively promotes interfaith dialogues and cooperation in Indonesia and abroad, serving as an executive director of Centre for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilisations (CDCC), Jakarta. Professor Mu'ti is a member of the Indonesia-United Kingdom Advisory Board (2007-2009), Executive Committee of Asian Conference of Religion for Peace (2010-2015), and Indonesia-United States Council of Religion and Pluralism (2016-present).

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### **Judge Somoud al-Damiri**

Judge Somoud al-Damiri is the first female appointed as the Chief Prosecutor of Personal Status for the Upper Council of Sharia courts, and the first female judge of the Sharia Court of Appeal in Palestine. She has been awarded the Integrity award in 2010. She studied Law and Contemporary Islamic Studies and is currently studying Theology. She is a valuable member of many committees such as the national team of CEDAW Committee, the National Team for Gender Equality, the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence and more.

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### **Karen Hoehn**

Karen is the Director of Bonstar SRL. She has helped partners improve health and reduce poverty around the world for 30+ years. A consultant since 2013, Karen has helped religious-affiliated organizations and FBOs; academic institutions; foundations; multilaterals; and NGOs focused on community development, SRHR, research and evaluation. Karen is the founding mother of the global Faith to Action Network, having brokered agreement on its 2011 Interfaith Consensus Statement In Support Of Family Planning And Reproductive Health. This year, Karen led an in-depth team study of secular-faith collaboration on SRHR for RFSU -- the focus of her presentation today -- and conducted a study of faith actor engagement in maternal mental health around the world for CCIH. Karen currently is coordinating the global lobby and advocacy work

for the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA). In 2019, she authored the FP2020 Brief “Faith And Family Planning Working Together To Drive Progress Post-2020.” Karen’s work has involved culturally respectful and responsive data collection from more than 106 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, and she has helped organizations raise US\$1.7 billion. She studied political science and philosophy, and has a Master’s degree in public policy focused on public sector financial management. multiple systems of oppression that have been normalized in society such as patriarchy, sexism and homophobia.

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### **Peter Munene**

Peter is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Faith to Action Network, a global interfaith network of more than 100 Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu and Muslim faith organisations represented in 26 countries. He has 22 years’ experience in advocacy and implementation of programmes targeting marginalized groups.

Previously, Peter worked for African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) where he was Head of Child Labour Department at its headquarters in Kenya and the Nigeria and Zambia (which he established) Chapters. He also worked as Country Director for DSW Tanzania, an office he established and later as International Affairs Manager in charge of advocacy, Africa and Asia.

Under Faith to Action Network, Peter has mobilized and identified an interfaith delegation to Al-Azhar University in Cairo, United Nations Commission for Population and Development (CPD) 51 and 52 and the International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) – 2011, 2013, 2016, 2018 and currently planning 2021. He has been key in organizing the first ever Faith Preconference at ICFP in 2016 in Bali Indonesia and 2018 in Kigali Rwanda. A similar pre-conference is being planned at ICFP 2021 in Thailand.

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### **Ann-Kathrin Baumgardt**

Ann-Kathrin Baumgardt is the Director of Strategic Business Development at IGT with a record of success in creating and driving financial, operational, sales and marketing strategies to optimise business performance - revenue, profitability, efficiency and service.

She is a founder of Faith to Action Network’s European Liaison Office and serves on its board, where she advises the network secretariat on strategy development, performance measurement and finances. She is the founder of Executive Coaching Associates, which offers individual and organisation coaching programmes to organisations, leaders/Leadership Teams, SMEs, founders, entrepreneurs and charities. multiple systems of oppression that have been normalized in society such as patriarchy, sexism and homophobia.



### **Dr Christina de Vries**

Christina de Vries is Senior Health Expert at Cordaid. Cordaid is an internationally operating value-based emergency relief and development organisation, working in and on fragility. Cordaid stands with those who are hit hardest by poverty and conflict. It supports them in their struggle to move beyond survival and to fully participate in equitable and resilient societies. Christina de Vries is a medical doctor, tropical medicine, specialized in epidemiology and public health. Her goal is to contribute to universal health coverage, particularly for women and children, particularly for those living in deprived settings and fragile states. With more than 30 years' experience, she is a vibrant advocate for access to health care as a basic human right, she has a profound understanding, as well as practical experience in the field of global health, disease control, and sexual and reproductive health, and the development of equitable health services in developing countries.

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### **Dr Aleu Garang**

Dr Aleu Garang is legal practitioner with extensive experience in international law, administrative law, and peace and security specialist of preventative diplomacy, mediation, conflict prevention and peace building. Dr Garang holds a bachelor's degree in law & Islamic Law (Sheria), licensed to practice law in Egypt, South Sudan and the Sudan.

Garang holds LLM in Laws (General), Philosophy Doctorate (Ph.D.) in Public International Law, Diploma & MA in Peace and Security Studies, trained in Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Sweden. Dr Garang served in public sector (Sudan and South Sudan) in various legal capacities for about 13 years and his last posting was Senior Legal Counsel posted as the Legal Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of South Sudan. Garang served in various international organizations namely, NRC, UNDP, UNMIS and W.B. both nationally (Sudan and South Sudan) and internationally (Yemen, Ethiopia, and Djibouti) as staff and consultant.

Dr Garang serves currently as Head of IGAD's Mission to the Republic of South Sudan, a diplomatic representational function, and doubles as the Director for the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) a function of preventive Diplomacy and Mediation. His focus is to build and operationalise IGAD's and the region's normative capacity on Mediation and build member states capacities on conflict prevention and mediation.





### **Rev Dr Sivin Kit**

Rev. Dr. Sivin Kit is the program executive for public theology and interreligious relations with the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, tasked with pursuing strategic theological questions and contributing in areas of religion in the public space, interreligious collaboration, and peacebuilding.

Previously, he taught theology, ethics, homiletics, and religious studies at the Malaysia Theological Seminary, where he was also director of the Centre for Religion and Society.

He has published articles in the fields of public theology, Christian-Muslim relations, ecumenism, and interreligious relations in Southeast and East Asia. His wider interests include contextual theology and religion and media. Kit holds a B.Th. and M.Th. from the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology. He received his Ph.D. in religion, ethics, and society from the University of Agder, Norway.

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### **Jeannette Uwizeye**

Ms. Uwizeye, is the Executive Director of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA). She has a deep calling and passion for peace building and conflict transformation; a field that she has worked in since 1999.

Ms. Uwizeye has vast experience in engaging in a multi-cultural context especially in addressing conflict and post conflict challenges in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa.

This includes religious leaders from different faiths and denominations, women, youth, community members, as well as different partners and government/ inter-governmental institutions.

She is a member of Regional Faith Women Mediation Network (REFWOMEN), a regional platform for faith women (Christians and Muslims), initiated by FECCLAHA in collaboration with her partners. This platform seeks to strengthen the voice of women and to ensure coordinated efforts in peace and advocacy cross the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. She is also a member of FemWise, a Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, which is a critical pillar of the Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union (APSA).

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### **Jabulile Malaza – SADC**

Jabulile Malaza is the Director Research in the Parliament of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

She is a woman of valour and a born-again Christian who execute the SADC PF SRHR HIV/AIDS Governance Project. She is a high profiled and visionary dynamic female leader who is ready to execute the vision, goal and mission in a robust and innovative way as enshrined in the strategic Plan and the expectations of AGENDA 2063 and any other entity.

## Annex: Track Session Speakers Biographies



### **Modi Enosa Mbaraza**

Modi is the Executive Director of YWCA South Sudan. She is a recognised champion of young women’s empowerment and leadership in South Sudan. She has been at the forefront of young women’s rights since 1997 when she initiated the formation of a group of 25 young women under the local Anglican Church in Yambio, with the objective to fight for their rights and to become self-dependant during the civil war. This became the foundation of the YWCA of South Sudan as it is known today, and has eight branches in Western Equatoria, Central Equatoria, Western Bahar El Gazal, and Eastern Equatoria. Modi has a degree in Human Resource Management from Bugema University in Uganda and a Masters in Social Work and Social policy from Nottingham University in the United Kingdom.

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### **Nagwa Eldeeb Botros**

Nagwa is a project manager at Ibrahimia Media Centre (IMC) affiliated to the Evangelical Church of Egypt and leading the YW4A program in Egypt. She has extensive experience in serving her community as she started her volunteering service at the age of 18 serving people and children with disabilities. Her work at IMC enabled her to work with women in an initiative against domestic violence. She was also central in a TV programme, “It’s Her Right” (حقها من) (which tackles community problems facing girls and women in the Arab society, such as early marriage, harassment, psychological and physical violence, and other sensitive issues that continue to hinder women’s freedom and equality. Nagwa holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Alexandria University, and has tertiary qualifications in Local Development & Human Rights, Programme Management and M&E as well as Improving Professional Performance through Psychodrama.

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### **Rev Dr. Makanda**

Dr. Makanda is the General Secretary at Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK). EAK is the national umbrella organisation for evangelical churches in Kenya. It was established in 1975 as Evangelical fellowship of Kenya under the auspices of the association of evangelicals in Africa. The alliance has a membership of 380 denominations in Kenya spread across the country. Dr Nelson also served as the Deputy General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya-NCCK. He holds a PhD from Africa International University (AIU).



### **Hawa Puzzo Ally**

Hawa is a young Woman champion under YW4A. She wears many huts. She is a paralegal with Nubian Rights Forum, is a paralegal with Daraja Mbili Vision Volunteers- an organization in Kisii that specialises in adolescent girls' mentorship on SRHR, and SGBV, and a Volunteer with Young Women Christian Association Kisii Branch. She has previously worked with the Kenya National commission on Human Rights to map Human Rights Defenders in Western Region in Kenya. She embodies the spirit of YW4A - young women being empowered to take up agency and being the voice of change in their communities.

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### **Deborah Olwal-Modi**

Deborah is the National General Secretary of YWCA Kenya. She is a transformative leader passionate about women and girls. A holder of a Master of Science degree in Development Management and Masters in Public Health, with over 20 years' experience working with NGOs, she has numerous successful projects in her portfolio and continues to sit in various steering committees. Deborah's current focus is to lead YWCA Kenya using her experience in strategy execution to achieve the strategic plan 2019-2023 dubbed, the "turnaround strategy" which is aimed at doing things differently to achieve better results in a rapidly changing environment.

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### **Mohammed Bun Bida**

Mohammed Bun Bida is the Programme Director of Muslim Family Counselling Service (MFCS), Kumasi, Ghana. He is a social development consultant with extensive experience in using innovative strategies including multi faith approaches to promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Family Health, Birth Spacing, Social Inclusion and Child and Family Rights. Mohammed also is an advocate for changing harmful tradition practices and negative Faith Belief which adversely affects women and children, such as Female Genital Cutting (FGC), Early and forced marriages and Gender Based Violence.

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### **Zanele Makombe**

Zanele is a social justice activist who believes in the power of words and voice that calls out injustices against women and children. Her 18 years of experience in supporting adolescent and youth programmes, sexual & reproductive health rights, and gender justice is of great value in her role as Programme & SRHR Advisor in the ACT Ubumbano team. Zanele has a Master's Degree in Development Studies.



### **Shamsia Ramadhan**

Ms. Ramadhan has over 15 years of working experience and extensive field operations in peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and Africa's security issues. She has worked in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Egypt, Nigeria, Niger, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Somalia. She has extensive experience in conducting peace and security assessments. Her areas of expertise and interest include community peacebuilding, inter-religious peacebuilding, and action, conflict-sensitivity, research on peace and security issues and peacebuilding and preventing/countering violent extremism.

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### **Nageeba Hassan Tegulwa**

Nageeba is a teacher by profession and a Transformative Peace Practitioner now for 23 years. She started the women's desk at Uganda Muslim supreme council 2009 and lobbied for women to be constitutionalized within interreligious council of Uganda. She moved the motion at the East African Community Peace & Security conference to have an interreligious council that has women and youth in leadership. She is an executive member of the African women of faith Network with ACRL, a member of the International Coordinating Committee –Global women of faith and a member of the high level Multifaith religious leaders committee for refugees with UNCHR & Religions for peace international.

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### **Shamsa Abubkar Fadhil**

Shamsa is a skilled, experienced and passionate mediator and community mobiliser. She provides the link between the community she works with and the security infrastructure at local and national levels. In 2014 she created a grassroots organisation dubbed Focus on Women and Youth in Coast Province for Political Development. The success of this platform led to her election as the first woman to chair the Mombasa District Peace and Security Committee (DPSC) a position she holds to date. She is the National Cohesion and Integration Commission focal peace and cohesion champion in the Coast Region and the chairperson of Mombasa Women of Faith Network in which she represents the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims.

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### **Christina Maasdam**

In the JISRA - programme faith actors at national and international level are working together for “Peaceful and Just societies where all enjoy Freedom of Religion and Belief”. I am proud to be the consortium coordinator of this very relevant and diverse programme.

It is my ambition to support and inspire people and organizations, in order to achieve these goals using each partner’s strength and expertise as a common denominator.

Over the last 25 years, I held several positions as a director in faith-based organizations, both in humanitarian aid and developmental programmes and health care institutes in my native country The Netherlands and in several foreign countries, like Ethiopia, Iraq and Syria. Living in different cultures and societies, among people with various religious and ethnic backgrounds, made me more aware that only listening, sharing and understanding each other and acknowledge differences, are mandatory to bridge (religious) divides.

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### **Stephanie Joubert**

Stephanie has a master degree in Cultural Anthropology and over 20 years’ experience in international development cooperation working towards peace and security in conflict and fragile contexts. She has lived and worked in different countries in South and South East Asia, Middle East and Africa.

Stephanie is currently working as a programme director with Mensen met een Missie for programmes on Freedom of Religion and Belief, including Joint Initiative for Strategic Action (JISRA), a strategic partnership under the Power of Voices framework of the Netherlands government. Responsibilities include strengthening and connecting grassroots changemakers, facilitating research and advocacy at national and international level.

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### **Dr Immaculée Mulamba Amisi**

Dr Immaculée Mulamba is an expert and trainer in sexual and reproductive health in the Cordaid Organization in the DRC. She has 15 years of reproductive health experience in emergency obstetric and neonatal care, family planning, post abortion care and clinical care for survivors of sexual violence. She has 8 years of experience in the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and youth. She held several positions of responsibility first as clinicians, then as Manager and Senior Manager of reproductive health projects in emergency and post-conflict situations. She supported the technical services of the DRC Ministry of Health in setting the standards and guidelines for neonatal maternal health and adolescents. She continues to provide technical support to staff of Health Ministry at the provincial and national levels and religious leaders.



### **Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome Asmani**

Sheikh Lethome is a Kenyan Muslim Religious Scholar. He holds a Master's Degree in Law and Islamic Shariah, a Bachelor's Degree in Education and a post-Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice.

Sheikh Lethome is a member of Jamia Mosque Committee – Nairobi and Legal and Religious Advisor to Supreme Council Of Kenya Muslims. He is the Secretary General of Center for Sustainable Conflict Resolution, Chairman – Global One – Kenya.

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### **Sheikh Yusuf**

Sheikh Yusuf Nasur is a trained, qualified, experienced and respected Muslim Scholar. He is the Director of Special Programmes at KMYA. He holds a Bachelor's degree in conflict resolution and peace building with a postgraduate diploma in Religious studies, certificate in Diplomacy, Governance and Peace. He is the Director of religious affairs at The Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) in Nairobi. He is the National Coordinator of the National Muslim Marriage Committee. Sheikh Yusuf is also a member of Interfaith Council of Clerics having served as the Chair since its inception. He has vast experience in inter and intra religious and cultural work in Kenya, Africa and global stages at large. He has participated in Inter-generational, Religious tolerance, co-existence and harmony topical issues at national and international forums. He leads project-level Cultural and Religious engagements including context sensitive environments at community, stakeholder and knowledge sharing activities and sessions.

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### **Peter Malir**

Peter Malir is the founder and the Executive Director at Christian Agency for Peace and Development (CAPaD) a faith based National Nongovernmental organization. He has extensive experiences in working and serving community with proven communitybased strategies in conflict transformation. Mr. Malir has represented the voices of young people in forums and peace talks as a leader and representative at both national, regional and international levels. He has engaged and served as volunteer with youth, women and children in protection, advocacy, awareness and programing since the age of 19 years. His work at CAPaD has enabled him take a leading role in advocating for women, youth & children rights including social, economic and political rights. He is a recipient of the Act4Peace Fellow award, a program that re-connects and engage young people achieve a community-based peace building approach through dialogue, trust and confident building in diversity.



### **Ms. Kate Wiggans**

Ms. Kate Wiggans is the United Nations Representative in Geneva for Islamic Relief Worldwide. Kate has spent 13 years working in policy, campaigning, communications, and external relations in the humanitarian sector with a focus on disarmament, conflict, refugee protection, shrinking civic space in fragile contexts, and a regional specialism in the Middle East. She currently co-chairs UNHCR's global interfaith taskforce and was instrumental in coordinating the engagement of faith-based organisations (FBO) at the Global Refugee Forum, especially in promoting FBO pledges focused on tackling xenophobia and building inclusive societies. She is a leading member of the team planning the implementation of one of these pledges: the 2022 "Welcoming the Stranger, Shaping the Future" conference of grassroots faith communities in refugee responses, alongside close colleagues from Lutheran World Federation and HIAS. In support of IRW's pioneering humanitarian-development-peace nexus programming, Kate has been active in promoting the importance of working alongside affected communities, including faith communities, in putting the theory into action. She has coordinated events at Geneva Peace Week for the past two years, focusing on foregrounding viewpoints of grassroots endeavors of local faith leaders, women, and youth groups. She is inspired to continue building dialogue by capturing learning and local expertise from different approaches to peacebuilding through a faith-sensitive lens.

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### **Kafeero Sulaiman**

A researcher and Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Expert with over 14 years of experience in Civil Society Work. He has been exposed to multiple project tasks, in Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti, Egypt and Sweden with capacity to prioritize and organize tasks effectively to maximize efficiency. Works well with others in an interactive and harmonious way with gender considerations as a team player to establish positive relationships.

Current MEL Manager with MCJL. A results-oriented team leader highly experienced in working with Faith Based and Non-Government Organizations, Reputable Development Agencies, Local Communities and Government Institutions.

A member of Uganda Evaluators Association (UEA) from 2016 to 2021, with 6 publications in the field of M&E. He is a management scholar at post graduate level in management studies, biased in Monitoring and Evaluation, with several trainings in peace and conflict resolution, a bachelor's degree in procurement and logistics management, Associate degree in Accounting and Finance.



### **Luz Francess Chua**

Luz Francess Chua or “Bicbic” to friends and colleagues, currently works as the Executive Director of the Catholics for Reproductive Health (C4RH), an advocacy group that endeavors to bring Catholics into full harmony with their faith and their right to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). She is an experienced trainer and development program manager.

She is a member of the Philippine Commission on Women- Gender and Development (GAD) Resource Pool—accredited to provide technical assistance as an expert in gender and development and gender mainstreaming in government agencies and units. In recognition for her advocacy initiatives for women’s empowerment, SRHR especially among the faithbased organizations, she became one of the co-chairs of the International Steering Faith SubCommittee that plans for the upcoming November 8-11, 2022 International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) in Thailand. President Duterte appointed her in 2020 as the Private Sector Representative to the Board of Commissioners of the Philippine Commission on Population & Development (POPCOM). She is also a Fellow in the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers’ Interfaith Fellowship Program for advancing interreligious Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia.

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### **Nyanzi Umar**

An advocate of the High court of Uganda with a niche’ in Human Rights Law and Constitutionalism. He has vast exposure in litigation, mediation and legal advice on access to justice and human rights concerns especially affecting women in Muslim communities.

He is a strong advocate for policy reforms concerning discriminative laws and policies. He is a team leader with passion in networking and working with grass root communities to foster social justice.

Umar is currently the President MCJL, Secretary to the Board, MCJL and a Partner SK and Co. Advocates. He is a Board Chair for Assorted Trends Africa (NGO) and Board member of Probono SME Support Initiative (NGO). He is a member of the Uganda Law Society and Uganda Muslim Lawyers Association. He has additional post graduate training in project management and implementation.





### **Alimatul Qibtiyah**

Alimatul is a commissioner at National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan) and professor on Gender Studies at Da'wah and Communication Faculty, Islamic State University (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia). She has been actively involved at the Center for Women's Studies, Kalijaga Institute for Justice as well as at CisForm (Center for Islam and Social Transformation). At the community level she is a leader of Research and Development and a member of Tarjeh and Tajdid Division at National Board 'Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah (2015-2022).

She got her Ph.D from University of Western Sydney, her first master degree on Social Psychology from Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia and her second master degree on Women's Studies from the University of Northern Iowa, USA in 2005 under Fulbright Scholarship. She is a speaker at various national and international seminars and conferences on gender, feminist, and women's issues (around 26 Countries). She is the author of *Feminis Muslim di Indonesia* and her current book chapter (2021) is *Gender Contention and Social Recognition in Muslim Women's Organizations in Yogyakarta in Indonesian Pluralities: Islam, Citizenship, and Democracy*. She is the founder of *Academi Feminis Muslim* and Her personal website [www.genderprogressive.com](http://www.genderprogressive.com); with email: [alimatul.qibtiyah@uin-suka.ac.id](mailto:alimatul.qibtiyah@uin-suka.ac.id)

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### **Yilma Hirpa Boru**

Mr. Yilma is currently the Project Manager for Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) at Ethiopia Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA). Mr Yilma has over 12 years of work experience in the government offices, local and international NGOs. He has had a chance to lead/ coordinate various projects on Peacebuilding, girl's education, women empowerment, Sexual and Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDs, among others. In recent times, Yilma contributed to the successful implementation of projects such as Building Community Resilience; Keeping Girls in School; Advancing Young and Adolescent Reproductive Health among others. He has provided technical support for various FBOs working with EIFDDA in recent times. He holds a Master Degree in Business Administration & Master Degree in Gender and Development.



### **Rev. Atuhaire Moses**

Rev. Atuhaire Moses is a dynamic young leader who started community empowerment work in 2008 when he was just 14 years. As an adolescent and president of Children's rights club and children's parliament that merged to be a fully-fledged community organization.

He is an award-winning personality who has won several awards for advancing human rights in grassroots communities including the award for outstanding performance and contribution to the state of African Women Campaign funded by European Union. He has stayed along the people who needed help most and experienced their challenges first time especially victims of SGBV, the poor and the sick people. Rev. Moses Atuhaire holds Bachelor degree in Public administration from Uganda Pentecostal University, with a diploma in theology. REV. Atuhaire is currently the Executive Director, Western Uganda FBO Network

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### **Salameh Bishara**

Salameh Bishara is a third generation Lutheran from Beit Jala. He studied in the Lutheran school of Bethlehem and continued his higher education in Bethlehem University majoring in Chemistry and Mathematics. He holds a Master degree in education and educational administration. Salameh worked as the principal of the Lutheran school of Beit Sahour and played a key role in the restructuring of educational work at ELCJHL. Salameh speaks four languages Arabic, English, German and Hebrew. He is an Advisor to the Gender Justice Working Group.

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### **Judge Scarlet Basel Bishara**

Scarlet Basel Bishara is a recognized women's rights champion and is the first female ecclesiastical judge in the Middle East. She has participated in various international conferences speaking on issues related to Gender Justice, representing ELCJHL and Lutheran World Federation in these forums. She has worked as an independent lawyer and the legal advisor for a Woman Shelter (MEHWAR) for abused women. She is also the legal advisor the Bethlehem Governor; providing advisories and support to women & family issues and gender justice. She also played a key role in the Personal Status Law reforms in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and The Holy Land. Scarlet has a law degree from the Arabic Beirut University and is a licensed judge in the Sharia' Courts, Catholic and Orthodox family Courts.



### **Dr. Martin Munyao**

Dr. Martin Munyao is a lecturer in peacebuilding studies at Daystar University. He is a PhD holder in Missiology from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. USA. Dr. Munyao also has a Master of Theology degree in African Christianity from Daystar University, Nairobi - Kenya. Martin has previously consulted for the CRID project and presented on the same entitled Alternative Theological Narratives that Support Understanding, Tolerance and Respect to Counter Radicalization and Violent Extremism.

Martin's research interests are in the areas of conflict transformation, inter-faith engagement, radicalization and violent extremism, migration and missions, and religion.

He has also published widely on the research areas about conflict, conflict prevention and transformation (Google Scholar).

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### **Elizabeth Gadia Phanuel**

Elizabeth is the Women's General Secretary of the South Sudan Pentecostal Church, Juba Area Board. She is also a Senior Librarian in the State Legislative Assembly of the Central Equatoria State in Juba, and the National Coordinator for Pan Africa Christian women's Alliance (PACWA). She is a Member of the Women League of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). She studied diploma in theology and administration and a bachelor's degree in biblical studies at the Nation-to-Nation Christian University. She advocates for the rights of all people at the grassroots in South Sudan.

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### **Rev Jami Sasaka**

Rev Sasaka is a long serving minister with the Friends church in Kenya. He is a trained theologian from Friends Theology College, Kaimos where he graduated with a Diploma in Biblical Studies and Sociology. Rev has an Advanced Diploma in Project Management from Cornerstone College and several courses in Youth development Mediation, Nonviolence, Religious pluralism, Governance, Human Rights and Interfaith Dialogue among others. Rev Sasaka served with the church for the last 22 years. He is a Program Manager for Chemchemi Ya Ukweli in-charge Peace building and Community engagement. This entails coordination of Active-Nonviolence Training, Interreligious Dialogue and Building local capacities for Peace. He chairs The Usalama Reforms Forum, National space on Security, Peace and Safety.

Re Sasaka is currently the Project Manager For JISRA Project for CYU being implemented in Isiolo, Nakuru, Migori and Kakamega



### **Séraphine Lugwarha**

Seraphine is the Nutrition and Family Planning Focal Point at the Diocesan Office of Medical Works at the Archdiocese of Bukavu in DR Congo. For the past thirteen years she has coordinated family planning activities, including training providers, creating demand, supervising activities, and advocating at the national, provincial and local levels. As part of her advocacy work, she participates in Sud Kivu's Permanent Multisectoral Technical Committee for Family Planning.

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### **Hajjat Nunu Salufa Aminata**

Haiijat Nunu is the Director of the « Association pour la Promotion de l'Entreprenariat Féminin » (APEF). She is also the President of the Muslim women's movement in Sud Kivu province. APEF supports women who want to start a business, whatever their project, the activity they choose, the maturity of the project and the profile of the entrepreneur. APEF believes it is important to help women stay motivated throughout the project and to find solutions when they are faced with a problem. The APEF promotes women's freedom to be entrepreneurs and enjoy equal opportunities. It intervenes in secondary schools, colleges, universities, companies and associations to advocate for gender justice.

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### **Sheikh Saleh Radjabo**

Sheikh Saleh Radjabo is the Council of Muslims in DR Congo's representative in Sud Kivu province. He also works as Inventory Management / Stores Management, Integrated warehouse officer at MONUSCO DRC.

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### **Emilie Weiderud**

Emilie is a Policy Advisor at Act Church of Sweden. She supports and engages in advocacy and policy work on various issues at both national and global level. Focus areas at the moment is SRHR and vaccine equity. Prior to this role she was working as a policy advisor at the central national level of the Church of Sweden and before working at the church was working in public health as well as womens movements and SRHR work in both Sweden and abroad. She holds an academic background in social anthropology (BA) and public health (MA), from Queen's University Belfast and Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm.



### **Patrick Kibe Ndung'u**

Patrick Kibe is a community empowerment and development professional and the DESIP Project Coordinator for Isiolo and Marsabit Counties in the Faith to Action Network.

Patrick works for Anglican Development Services of Mt. Kenya East (ADSMKE) as the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Manager serving 6 Counties (Kirinyaga, Embu, Tharaka Nithi, Meru, Isiolo and Marsabit Counties). He has worked for over 10 years in with diverse state, non-state and community stakeholders on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) initiatives, Sexual Reproductive Health, Rights and Family Planning (SRHR/FP), Water Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) and resource mobilization in East Africa specifically in the arid and semi-arid areas of Isiolo, Kilifi and Marsabit Counties in Kenya.

Patrick holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Disaster Management and International Diplomacy, a Professional Diploma in business management and a monitoring and evaluation certification from Kenya Institute of Management.

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### **Youstina Youssef**

Youstina Youssef is a project manager at Ibrahimia Media Center, an FBO affiliated to the Evangelical Church in Egypt. As a project leader she has 5 years of experience in developing her community and making it well environment for hosting refugee and migrants. She has a great passion in supporting vulnerable and marginalized people and empowering them that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

Youstina benefited from her leadership studies at Catalyst USA, as she become a leader of 12 member team of nationals and refugees implementing integration workshops and several interventions as psychological and educational support, talents' development in their hosting community for refugees in Alexandria.

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### **Farida Abdulbasit Morodhi**

Farida Abdulbasit is a program coordinator working in Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance (KMYA), a non-profit organization working towards youth empowerment and promoting participation in national development processes. Farida has over 5 years' experience working with non-profit organizations in the programs and monitoring and evaluation sectors. She has profound skills in program management, developing and implementation of civic education, leadership and counter violence programs. With a key responsibility in monitoring program design and implementation and taking a lead in developing tools for evaluating quantitative and qualitative data, Farida utilizes her skills and experience in data collection and analysis to ensure that information shared within and beyond the organization is accurate and consistent. Farida has participated and won an award from Faith to Action Network for outstanding performance and lasting contribution to the State of African Women, Right by Her Campaign proving her expertise in communicating and presenting program information. She utilizes her free time to read both fiction and non-fiction books as well as educative and entertaining films.

## Annex: Facilitators Biographies



### **Catherine Wanjiku**

Catherine (she/her) is a technical programme manager for the YW4A programme. She has over 10 years of progressively senior experience in designing, implementing, and monitoring bilateral and multilateral development projects. She has technical competences in; Young women leadership development, Gender inclusion, Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH), Sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR), Monitoring and Evaluation and Health Systems Strengthening. She joined the World YWCA in 2021. Catherine is passionate about women's rights. Her greatest desire is to see a world where all women and girls have a voice and can advocate for their rights to realize their full potential. Catherine holds a master's degree in development Studies, a bachelor's degree in planning, and is a certified global development monitoring & evaluation specialist.



### **Maria Tororey**

Ms. Tororey is a Healthcare professional with over 15 years of experience in different health program areas including SRHR, Adolescent and Youth friendly health services, HIV prevention and treatment and public health in general. She is currently serving as the SRHR Technical Lead at Faith to Action Network based in Nairobi Kenya providing technical support and managing various SRHR related components in the organization.

Maria is a member of the Reproductive Health Network in Kenya (RHNK) which is a network of health professionals within private and public sectors committed to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, advocacy and service provision. In the SRHR space Maria has been involved in advocating for increased access to and uptake of sexual and reproductive health and rights through ensuring supportive health systems and at Faith to Action Network, through empowering and working with Faith Leaders and faith actors, applying faith-based approaches. She has been at the frontline as a service provider including for family planning, SGBV prevention and management, STI including HIV prevention and care and responsive adolescent/ youth sexual and reproductive health services. Maria holds a Master's degree in Adolescent Development, Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and a Diploma in Clinical Medicine.



### **Judy Amoke**

Judy is an experienced gender and social inclusion expert with a focus on Faith, Women and Girls rights issues. She is a development professional in fund management, programme management, monitoring and evaluation. She has over eleven years of work experience with development agencies, local NGOs and INGOs dealing with global SRHR, Women Rights, Health and Gender programmes. She has vast experience in program planning, management and implementation; sub-grant management, participatory approaches for planning and implementation, Institutional Strengthening for CSOs. Judy is the programme manager in Faith to Action Network leading programs that focus on addressing issues that religious actors grapple with.

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### **Ranan Issa Abu Shanab**

Ranan Issa Abu Shanab is the Gender Justice Program Manager at ELCJHL. With over 5 years of professional experience in the field of gender justice, she heads the ELCJHL's Women Ministry by working closely with its pastors and Women's Committee. During the course of her career, Ranan has had the opportunity to work with interfaith-based actors who are dedicated to the equality of women. She is a co-chair on the Act Alliance Gender Justice Reference group and a co-founder of the Gender Justice 4 Palestine committee.

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### **Hezron Cotts Masitsa**

Hezron holds a MA in Peace Studies and International Relations. He has also attended several short courses on peace building, including the Summer Peace building program at Eastern Mennonite University, Coalition for Peace in Africa (South Africa) and the Albine Christian University & Duncum Center for Conflict Resolution. He is a trainer in Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP), Do No Harm/ Local Capacities for Peace (DNH/LCP), Transformative Dialogue and Alternatives to Violence (AVP)

Hezron has worked as an Interfaith Network Coordinator with Chemichemi Ya Ukweli, Regional Programs Coordinator for Change Agent Peace Program (Quaker Service Norway) that covered the Great Lakes region and most recently as the National Peace building Coordinator with World Vision Kenya.

Hezron has previously served as the chairman for the Quaker Peace Network – Africa. He is involved with Alternatives to Violence Program in Kenya and is founding chairperson for Pamoja for Transformation that promotes peace and economic empowerment. He is also a Certified Public Mediator serving through the Court annexed mediation process of the Judiciary of Kenya.

## Annex: Convention Interfaith Statement

### Interfaith Statement on human dignity, diversity and inclusion

Nairobi, 9 December 2021

#### Preface

We, representing 56 faith organisations from 26 countries, have come together in Nairobi, Kenya, from December 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to imagine a shared future of flourishing harmonious communities, where everybody, regardless of religion, gender, age, culture, ethnicity, race, ability or any other dimension of diversity enjoys a dignified life.

#### Our shared vision

We recognize that we all share a common and united vision of human development, where all people have access to justice, peace, health, education, security, and spirituality, even if our approaches and practices may differ towards achieving this vision.

#### Challenges

We note with concern that our common world faces serious challenges, and our vision seems to be a distant reality, more so considering the current Covid pandemic, climate change, unequal distribution of resources and conflict.

Too often, our people face violence in their homes and communities: For example, nearly 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older, around the world have been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner or both, at least once in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Too often, our people, especially young people, are forced to migrate because of abject poverty or violent conflicts. By the end of 2020, 78.5 million people were forcibly displaced. This represents the highest number available on record.<sup>2</sup>

Too often, our people suffer from high mortality of women and children due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth - mostly from preventable or treatable causes.<sup>3</sup> The lack of global solidarity and inadequate management of the current Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated injustice and inequality and hugely impacted the lives of people: schools have been closed and people have lost their livelihoods.

#### Our Mission

We recall that human dignity and the sacredness of life is rooted in our sacred texts. Realising and protecting human dignity, its fulfilment and wellbeing is at the heart of our mission. We envision inclusive, diverse, just and peaceful societies.

Our religions uphold the values of compassion, respect for each other, equality and non-discrimination.

<sup>1</sup> Source: WHO (9 March 2021), "Violence against women" retrieved on 2/12/2021 here <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Migration data portal (30 June 2021), "Forced migration or displacement", retrieved on 2/12/2021 here: [https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/forced-migration-or-displacement#footnote2\\_iwb3yeI](https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/forced-migration-or-displacement#footnote2_iwb3yeI)

<sup>3</sup> Source: WHO (5 October 2021), „New global targets to prevent maternal deaths“, retrieved on 2/12/2021 here: <https://www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2021-new-global-targets-to-prevent-maternal-deaths>



Leading by example, solidarity, interfaith cooperation and partnerships are important ways to achieve this mission.

### Interfaith Statement

We are aware of the important role we play and the influence we have. In order to fulfil our rights and responsibilities and protect the human dignity of all people.

We recognise that we must make critical choices and informed decisions.

We affirm our conviction that diverse societies are a strength that must be cherished and protected.

We affirm our common and united vision of human development, where all people have access to justice, peace, health, education, security and spirituality.

We are committed to continue fostering inclusive spaces for all people of our communities regardless of their religion, gender, age, culture, ethnicity, race, ability or any other dimension of diversity. We will “welcome the other” and guide our communities towards the virtues of respect, love, solidarity and care for our neighbours.

We are committed to interfaith action and collaboration in order to increase our understanding of each-other, building bridges between different stakeholders to realizing greater impact.

We are committed to seeking constructive solutions to the challenges our communities are facing such as people’s health, specifically sexual and reproductive health and rights, mental health and Covid-19, gender and social justice, climate change and peaceful coexistence, and

are committed to ending practices that limit the flourishing of our communities.

We are committed to reviewing our own laws, policies, attitudes and practises that enable women’s and girls’ access to decision-making. We are committed to educating believers so that they may overcome mistrust, prejudices and dehumanising ideas about other religious groups.

We are committed to promote life-affirming theologies and avoid selective interpretations of sacred texts. We acknowledge the compassionate nature of religion and do not accept the practices that have caused harm in the name of religion.

We are committed to promoting alternatives to radical and extremist narratives that are used to fuel discrimination, tensions, mistrusts and conflicts.

We are committed to promoting and protecting the freedom of religion or belief of all individuals.

We are committed towards advocating for greater accountability of all stakeholders to their responsibilities and obligations.

We are committed to participating in civic spaces and contributing to policy-making and implementation.

We believe that together we can build strong, harmonious and flourishing communities where everyone can live a dignified life.

We declare our motivation to work with other partners and stakeholders to achieve these goals.



**Faith to Action Network**

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