



Ranan Issa, Gender Justice Program Manager, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

Youth Leading the Change in Palestine

Empowered young people play a critical role in the development of communities. Young people need to be imparted with vital skills that enable communities to thrive, especially in areas concerning youth. Young people require information and education to be able to fully access and exercise their rights; this will enable them to effectively participate in the development of their communities.

In this regard, Faith to Action Network partner, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) organized a three-day intensive skills-building conference targeting 30 youth aged 18 to 28 years from the Lutheran Congregations.

The conference themed "Youth Leading the Change," aimed to equip participants with leadership skills needed to bring meaningful and positive contributions to the Palestinian society so that they can be young agents of change. The conference sought to increase the agency and the voice of young people in promoting their active role in influencing policy change and implementation.

In the sessions, the youth were able to strategize on ways and incentives to strengthen youth participation. In addition, creating safe spaces for young people to express themselves and reflect on their needs and hopes for a better future. Gender Justice Program Manager, Ranan Issa, and Gender Justice Program Assistant, Shadin Nassar, presented a session on leadership which focused on qualities of a good leader.

Rev. Elina Siukonen and Rev. Ashraf Tannous spoke about the importance and theological basis of gender equality and why it matters to the Lutheran church. They particularly noted the upcoming ordination of the ELCJHL's first Palestinian female pastor, a 25 years old, Rev. Sally Azar. ELCJHL encouraged her to study Theology and vouched for her to be awarded a scholarship by the Evangelical Lutheran church in America.

During the discussions, many participants demonstrated their passion for the topic of youth leadership in Palestine and their role in influencing change on transforming social norms and practices of different communities.

"The conference was a great opportunity for young people to be heard; giving the youth a chance to express themselves is something that is not so common." Marah Demes

The youth called for bold and transformative steps that are needed to overcome the root causes of inequality and discrimination. Their recommendations to bring this change included: The Lutheran church having a fully-fledged youth ministry that is youth-led and self-sustaining where they can discuss the issues of gender equality; having dialogues on how young women can be leaders in society; creating platforms for the youth to use their voices and reach out to more people; and, encouraging freedom of speech for the youth by creating opportunities for them to engage in theological dialogues about their identity in the church.

The youth expressed a passion to hold future conversations around equal job opportunities for men and women with equal pay; challenging gender roles and gender-based norms in the Palestinian society and, becoming good leaders who will influence the next generation.

This activity was part of the Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy, and Accountability #YW4A programme, implemented by Faith to Action Network and ELCJHL in Palestine.

Contributor: Ranan Issa, Gender Justice Program Manager, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).

Youth for Change, Sexual Reproductive Health, and Rights in Malawi



An ongoing intergeneration meeting

Given their trusted and strong presence, there is tremendous potential for faith organizations to influence people's choices on family health and wellbeing. However, some faith leaders and institutions do not always feel free to have honest and open discussions with adolescents and youth. In particular, talking about sex, sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health is difficult. Yet, such adult-youth/adolescent conversations are needed to protect adolescents and youth from risky decisions and enhance life-affirming choices.

Adolescents and youth do not have adequate information to make informed decisions about access to sexual and reproductive health services. To better protect adolescents from teenage pregnancies and child marriages, faith leaders need to be more responsive and open to young people's needs, while enhancing the environment inside faith institutions to learn about these topics.

In this regard, Faith to Action Network, ACT Ubumbano, Brot für die Welt, and Synod of Livingstonia Development Department (SOLDEV), a faith-based non-governmental organization in Malawi work together to create safe spaces for adolescent girls and boys to freely discuss SRHR issues without judgment within faith organizations.

The activities aim at empowering young people aged 18 to 24 years with adequate SRHR information.

"Our area is challenged with issues of teenage pregnancies, rising cases of gender-based violence, school dropouts, and high prevalence of HIV/AIDS hence as people of faith, we have most often neglected taking part in addressing these challenges subjecting the majority of our young people into some noticeable challenges emanating from such negligence"

Pastor Alick Phiri, Chairperson, Kande Pastors fraternal in Malawi, made these remarks during the 1st meeting held to discuss SRHR Issues affecting the youth of Malawi. Pastor Phiri engaged several stakeholders including Youth Network Secretary, Child Protection Workers, Mazembe Pastor's Fraternal Chair, and District Council Leadership.

Pastor Phiri observed that equipping adolescents and the youth with SRHR information helps them live a productive life that does not deter their well-being. Pastor Phiri strongly believes in young people being at the forefront in the design and implementation of youth-focused SRHR programs. Being at the front line will ensure that the youth are leading the change.

Additionally, participants realized that faith leaders and congregants lacked correct information on sexual and reproductive health and rights coupled with several myths. In solidarity, they agreed that faith leaders and faith institutions need to be deliberate in having open discussions with young people to change behaviors that perpetuate teenage pregnancies and child marriages.

SOLDEV's work has already enhanced the provision of youth-friendly SRH information and services in clinics, health centers, and communities to the younger generation. Faith leaders, traditional leaders, young mothers, and government officials have agreed to allow the younger generation to speak out on issues concerning their sexual and reproductive health. The youth who have participated in activities have pledged their total commitment and participation.

SOLDEV's activities are part of the Masithethe! Let's talk! project, implemented by Faith to Action Network in partnership with ACT Ubumbano and Brot für die Welt to promote interfaith and intergenerational partnerships to jointly enhance adolescents' and youth's sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Southern Africa region.

Contributor: Kenneth Sakala Executive Director, Synod of Livingstonia Development Department (SOLDEV), Mzuzu, Malawi

Communities Richer in Diversity (CRID) Project Closure

Faith to Action Network took part in a closure meeting for the project Communities Richer in Diversity (CRID). The partners discussed the complexities and dynamics of the different approaches each undertook in their context. They emphasized that strained interfaith relations mediated by deeply rooted cultural factors related to multiple and intersecting form of identities contributes to othering, where identities are formed by excluding others - "us versus them". This harms intercommunal relations and sometimes results in conflicts. Participants of the recent closure event of the Communities Richer in Diversity project noted commonalities and differences. They realized that in some cases, their project work had reversed and improved intercommunal relationships through everyday peace activities .

Faith to Action Network was a core member of this project aiming to promote cultural diversity and respect for the equal dignity of all people in Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda through interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Faith to Action Network's role was to manage a small grant and micro-grant facility, accompany grantees with technical assistance, document their work through baselines, endlines and case studies.

The closing meeting took place in Bujumbura, Burundi, and brought together representatives from Council for Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA), Faith to Action Network (F2A), and African Council for Religious Leaders (ACRL) and national partners from Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan, Interreligious Council of Burundi, Uganda Joint Christian Council, Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance, Ibrahimia Media Centre-Egypt, and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. The consortium leads and the partners discussed potential scale-up strategies, with Faith to Action Network already citing the success of The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) as a major scale-up, to extend the gains of peaceful and just societies by leveraging the freedom of religion and belief.

The consortium leads and the partners also visited project beneficiaries, in Kamenge location in Burundi, where a peace platform, a safe intergenerational space for interfaith dialogue, had been constituted by the Inter-Religious Council of Burundi targeting men, women, and youth during implementation. The members shared compelling stories about the project, which are documented in a case study, and how the project interventions helped them leverage their diversities to enhance everyday peace. Please read more about the CRID project and the intervention in Burundi [here](#).

Meet Faith to Action Member: Ibrahimia Media Center (IMC)



Complete together" initiative focusing on peaceful coexistence under Community Richer In Diversity programme

Who is IMC?

Ibrahimia Media Center (IMC) is a faith-based organization, affiliated with the Evangelical Fellowship of Egypt. It was established in 2005 in Alexandria- Egypt to support the Arab communities enjoying a better quality of life.

IMC's vision is to spread the principles of heaven's kingdom in the Arab society. Its mission is to promote peaceful coexistence and human rights through capacity building, creating common spaces, raising awareness, and developing societies aware of their rights and seeking to obtain them.

IMC's Work

Targeting vulnerable groups, supporting rights holders, advocating peace and reconciliation, empowering women, and building capacities of civil society organizations.

Advancing the life of society through the adoption, design, and implementation of development projects that support equality, and combat poverty in all its forms especially poverty in knowledge.

Focusing on empowering women, especially young ones, has been in relation with Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy, and Accountability (YW4A) program, as the program is interlinked with IMC's missions and on-ground activities for supporting young women, enhancing Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) capacities and advocating rights.

Empowering young women to own their voice and take their place in decision-making towards achieving gender-justice laws, policies, and norms. Through the Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy, and Accountability (YW4A), IMC is targeting to build the capacity of 4,200 young women in leadership skills, gender equality, and advocacy.

Advocating for peaceful co-existence while building the capacities of civil societies.

Partnership with Faith to Action Network

IMC and Faith to Action Network have worked together in several projects:

IMC worked on "Co-existence for peace "in 2021. This aimed to create a peaceful society where youth have tolerance and mutual understanding and have respect for cultural and religious diversity in the community. IMC implemented several activities to prepare the youth to respond to or predict tension, crises, and violence incidents within their respective communities.

Young women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy, and Accountability. This is aimed to strengthen and diversify participation and amplify the voices of young women to effectively influence decision-making towards gender-just laws, policies, norms, and practices related to their bodily integrity and equal participation.

To read more about their Work click [here](#):

Case Study Series No. 5

**Interfaith Peacebuilding
at the Lower Strata:
Building Resilience in Juba,
Bor, and Yei in South Sudan**



We endeavor to capture and evidence our work. This week we are featuring a case study entitled [Interfaith Peacebuilding at the Lower Strata: Building Resilience in Juba, Bor, and Yei in South Sudan](#).

This case study explores the impacts of interfaith peacebuilding activities in South Sudan that the Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan (EASS) and Pan-African Christian Women Alliance (PACWA) implemented in Juba, Yei, and Bor. It assesses the impacts by exploring three themes that emerge from the analysis of secondary and primary evidence, namely, changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancing individual resilience, and improving relations between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups. Combining analyses of the EASS/PACWA project reports with primary empirical data collected from the three locations, the study examines EASS/PACWA interventions within the broader conflict resolution and peace processes in South Sudan.

Overall, the underlying thinking is that national peace agreements, which the elite sign in mediated negotiations, do not lead to durable peace unless the implementers consider the agency of the grassroots communities. Since faith communities are rooted in these grassroots communities, they can promote post-agreement tolerance, reconciliation, and peace. The research reviewed 17 EASS/PACWA project documents and collected empirical data from 92 project participants and beneficiaries. It finds that EASS/PACWA contributed to improving individual and community relations by triggering a process of 'opening-up' which challenged the participants' stereotypes and prejudices towards the 'Other' and broadened their perceptions and worldviews. Such bottom-up peacebuilding work complements elite peace agreements at the national level.

Access the case study [here](#)

Upcoming Events

CCIH 2022

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

JUNE 2022



*Loving Our Neighbor:
A Christian Response to a Changing World*

The Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH) virtual conference is ongoing. Join them as they bring together colleagues from across the globe to discuss how Christians - with love for Christ and neighbor - are working to serve our communities, and striving for high-quality, sustainable solutions. The conference will meet virtually in six sessions on June 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, and 23 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm EAT for programming followed by fellowship and networking. There will be simultaneous interpretations of French and Spanish during the conference.

For more information click here:

<https://www.ccih.org/events/>

Job Center

- **TEARFUND: Digital Data Analyst Communications for Development** (Part-Time and can be Based in the UK, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa or Nigeria). Are you passionate about using your skills to gain insights from data and then present it back to stakeholders? Do you want to know that your work is having a positive impact, equipping people with knowledge and skills to face the challenges of poverty and injustice in our world? If yes, Read more and Apply by clicking [here](#)
- **Mensen Met Een Missie- Project Manager-** For our programme on peacebuilding in Cameroon and for our Women, Peace and Security programme in DRC and Burundi, we are looking for an enthusiastic new colleague; a programme manager who is fluent in French and has a strong affinity with themes such as gender equality, youth inclusion and interreligious cooperation. Read and apply by clicking [here](#).
- **Faith to Action Network - Finance and operations officer** – We are Implementing a project on Solutions for supporting healthy adolescents and rights protection (SHARP) funded by the EU. The project takes place in Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zambia and at the East African regional level. The project is for a duration of four years. Read and apply by clicking [here](#)
- **Faith to Action Network - Consultancy services for the provision of SEAH and Integrity capacity strengthening** – We are seeking services of an experienced and qualified consultant to conduct assessments, develop roll out, and train Faith to Action Network Secretariat Staff, members and partners on Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (SEAH and Integrity). Read and apply by clicking [here](#).
- **Faith to Action Network and Health Action International (HAI) – Consultancy Services for Sexual & Reproductive Health Commodities: Measuring Prices, Availability & Affordability** - We are seeking a consultant to undertake the data collection, entry and validation activities in Kenya on the Solutions for Supporting Healthy Adolescents and Rights Protection (SHARP) project. SHARP's objectives are that health service providers in the public, private and faith sectors have quality assured SRH services and commodities, including for family planning, are available. To achieve this, HAI and Faith to Action Network will conduct health facility research measuring the price, availability, affordability and stock-outs of SRH commodities. Read more and apply [here](#).

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