



Joint Learning Initiative
on Faith & Local Communities
Strengthening Evidence-Based Faith Engagement

The Work and Evidence Generation of Faith Actors on Peacebuilding and Governance in East Africa



Scoping Study Report of the JLI East Africa Shared
Learning Hub on Governance, Peacebuilding, and
Local Faith Actors

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Foreword

This report is a result of a long process of collaborative and cooperative engagement with members of the East Africa Learning Hub, a regional learning platform focused on peacebuilding, governance and role of local faith actors co-founded by TAABCO and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI). The report has been produced by Professor Fredrick Ogenga¹, the Hub Co-chair, who I have known and worked with over the past four years, a seasoned media and security studies academic and mentor. Professor Ogenga has provided leadership on data collection, analysis and report writing, engaging the rest of us at the Hub all through the process of the scoping study.

JLI has been making efforts towards more fair and equitable research and learning partnerships. JLI is developing further collaboration with development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors from the global south, shifting more power and visibility to the stories and priorities of local faith actors, and investing in context-driven learning communities at local, national, and regional levels. Through the Fair and Equitable Approach, JLI is renewing a process to confront asymmetries of power in its research, joint learning, and partnerships. The aim is to increase participation and shift more power (resources and decision making) towards local movements and local faith communities and ensure that faith actors, academics, civil society and policymakers collaborate in generating evidence and implementing practical interventions on matters related to development, peacebuilding and governance. This study unpacks some of the asymmetries in research and evidence on faith, peacebuilding, governance, and development in East Africa.

It is my hope that this study will open deeper conversations among the academia, civil society actors, governments, and development partners in East Africa, but also from across the globe in re-examining power dynamics, objectives and benefits of research and evidence to target audiences of the research and utilizers of evidence gathered. This is already an ongoing discourse at the global level and this study should indeed plug into these conversations.

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Executive Summary

This report examines the role of local faith actors in governance and peacebuilding initiatives in the East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Drawing on literature, key informant interviews with faith actors, policy makers, and researchers, as well as detailed case studies, the report considers both the contributions of faith actors to governance and peacebuilding evidence and practice in East Africa, as well as the significant challenges they face in their work.

The report finds that while faith actors have played pivotal roles in supporting peacebuilding and stable governance, their effectiveness is limited by challenges such as financial constraints, political interference, partisanship, and poor coordination mechanisms between faith actors and other stakeholders involved in governance and peacebuilding. Moreover, while faith actors can sometimes play active roles in generating evidence around governance and peacebuilding, such research is rarely recognised or adopted by national, regional, or international decision-making spaces. Finally, the report notes that while there is a growing body of African scholarship examining peacebuilding in Africa, there is insufficient research looking at the specific contributions of indigenous and local religious approaches to governance and peacebuilding.

The report recommends supporting local faith actors - either financially or through training - to continue leading research on the critical role they play in governance and peacebuilding, and specifically build the evidence base on indigenous approaches to peacebuilding in Africa. Forums must be convened to ensure such research is effectively communicated to other researchers, civil society organisations, donors, and policymakers involved in governance and peacebuilding. Furthermore, it calls on investing in coordination mechanisms between faith actors and other relevant stakeholders to ensure effective and impactful joint learning and action on governance and peacebuilding in East Africa.

Key Findings

- Faith actors play a critical role in facilitating governance and peacebuilding in East Africa, due to their moral leadership, credibility at different levels of society, and their efficacy as trusted mediators between different actors
- The main challenges facing the work of faith actors in peacebuilding and development are financial challenges, political interference, partisanship, and a lack of adequate capacity to conduct research.
- There exists a lack of coordination mechanisms to support collaboration and learning between faith actors, civil society organisations, researchers, donors and policy makers engaged in governance and peacebuilding.
- There is a significant amount of local evidence produced by East African scholars, including faith actors, civil society, and academics, on faith, peacebuilding and governance, much of the work needs to be appraised through adoption of recommendations to transform experiences of grassroots communities.
- Local institutions, including faith-based organizations, civil society, and academia, are at the forefront of evidence production. However, some are supported by external donors and may be driven by donor agendas.
- There is insufficient evidence examining the potential of indigenous and local religious approaches to governance and peacebuilding challenges

Key Recommendations

- Mechanisms for concrete coordination between local faith actors, governments, researchers, and civil society organisations must be established to enable improved cooperation, mainstreaming of best practice, and appropriate support for local faith actors engaging in governance and peacebuilding.
- There is a need to build the evidence on indigenous and local religious approaches to addressing governance and peacebuilding challenges. Local faith actors should be supported to actively contribute to evidence generation, for example through financial aid to conduct research, training to build research capacity, or removing barriers to publishing and dissemination of locally-led research.
- International donors and researchers should support the research priorities of local institutions (including faith actors, civil society, and academia) and be cautious to avoid imposing their own policy or research priorities on local actors.
- International humanitarian actors, national and regional governments, universities, and faith actors, must invest in forums for sharing learnings on the multiple roles faith actors play in governance and peacebuilding,
- Research and evidence on governance and peacebuilding should be made more accessible for local faith actors and grassroots communities. To this end, faith actors should be supported to use different strategies for creative, effective, and evidence-based engagement with grassroots communities such as through music, arts and cultural strategies.

List of Abbreviations

ADZ	Anglican Diocese of Zanzibar
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative
CAR	Central African Republic
CMDPS-RU	Center for Media, Democracy, Peace & Security-Rongo University
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
ICC	International Criminal Court
JLI	Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KMYA	Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NCCK	National Church Council of Kenya
NRA	National Resistance Army
PCFK	Peacemaker Corps Foundation Kenya
UPDM/A	Uganda People Democratic Movement/Army
YMA	Young Muslim Alliance

Definition of Terms

Democratic peace / liberal peacebuilding	Democratic peace posits that societies are more peaceful if they are democratic (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).
Democratic institutionalism	A liberal system of governance that allow for periodic elections through civic participation, respect for constitutionalism, the rule of law human rights and civil liberties (Chitanga, 2023).
Perpetual peace	The article “The End of Democratic Peace in the Age of the Strongman,” Jurist (2023), describes this as an ideal concept that postulates that nations or societies that are democratic and liberal are less occasioned by conflict because they can collaborate and negotiate themselves out of possible conflict since they see themselves as collaborators and not competitors in the balance of power.
Pan-African decolonial approaches to liberal democracy	In the article “The End of Democratic Peace in the Age of the Strongman,” Jurist (2023), these are approaches that foreground pan-African values and argue for their exploitation using locally available infrastructures for peacebuilding to solve local problems (i.e., African solutions to African problems)
The Local Turn	Attempt to transform both the research on and the practice of international peacebuilding with the aim of incorporating views, experiences, and practices from the Global South and, thereby, overcome the predominance of Northwestern concepts and templates in the practice and scholarship of international peace operations (Wolff, 2022).
Faith actors	In the “State of Evidence,” JLI (2022), this is described as a diverse group of actors who are commonly referred to in different ways, including local, national, and international faith-based organizations (FBOs), religious communities, and religious leaders.

Introduction

This report argues that even though local evidence is abound regarding the role of local faith actors in peacebuilding and governance in East Africa, there seems to be lack of enthusiasm in appraising this evidence by critical stakeholders, limiting the potential of the contribution of faith in peacebuilding and governance at the praxis level. This report details how desk literature in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda was used to unmask some of the gaps revealed by local evidence, and uses Key Informant Interviews (KIs) in the three countries to assess the challenges and opportunities faced by local faith actors working in governance and peacebuilding. The report then shares case studies exploring the potential successes and limitations of peacebuilding and governance interventions led by local faith actors in East Africa.

Through the literature review, KIs, and case studies, the report sought to address the following four research questions:

1. What is the status of local evidence generation on faith, peacebuilding and governance in East Africa?
2. What does this status mean regarding the contribution of local faith actors in peacebuilding and governance in East Africa?
3. What challenges and opportunities does the evidence reveal regarding faith, peacebuilding, and governance in East Africa?
4. How can the case of local evidence be used to argue for potential success of locally led interventions by faith actors in the work of peacebuilding and governance in East Africa?

The report is divided into five sections. **Section One** details the pan-African theoretical conceptualization used in this study. It explores African scholarship on governance and peacebuilding, and examines new trends in decolonized and indigenous African approaches to peacebuilding. **Section Two** reviews a sample of the literature about local faith actors, governance and peacebuilding in East Africa. **Section Three** shares findings from key informant interviews conducted with policymakers, researchers, and local faith actors in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. **Section Four** reflects on case studies of local faith actors supporting governance and peacebuilding in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. **Section Five** provides conclusions and recommendations drawing on the data analysed.

The study concluded from the results of the literature review, KIs and case studies that there is a significant amount of local evidence on faith, peacebuilding, and governance, but insufficient acknowledgement and uptake of local evidence at the policy and practical level. The case studies are therefore useful in demonstrating the potential success of locally led practical interventions.

The East Africa Learning Hub on Governance, Peacebuilding, and Local Faith Actors

The purpose of this study emerged from the East Africa Learning Hub on Governance, Peacebuilding, and Local Faith Actors, a collaborative, interdisciplinary learning network jointly founded by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI) and TAABCO Research and Development Consultants (Kenya). Founded in April 2022, the East Africa Hub brought together researchers, local faith actors, and community development practitioners from across Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, to engage in joint learning and share research on the role of local faith actors in governance and peacebuilding work in the region.

Prior to the establishment of the East Africa Hub, TAABCO worked with partners in Uganda and Tanzania to convene a series of Listening Dialogues. “Listening Dialogues” are a methodology developed by JLI for facilitating conversations between local faith actors, practitioners, and researchers, around their experiences in participating in and leading research and evidence in their region. They can be held both face to face and virtually. In East Africa, the Listening Dialogues were coordinated with support from the Peacemaker Corps Foundation Kenya (PCFK), the Center for Media, Democracy, Peace and Security, Rongo University, Better World Uganda, and SPAIDE. The Dialogues, which took place in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda sought to create a safe space for listening to each other, learn, share knowledge and therein jointly work towards ensuring the inclusion of local voices in global policy debates regarding the work of faith, peacebuilding and governance.

In Kenya, the Listening Dialogue established a gap between academia, civil society and faith actors on a common approach to the work of faith, governance and peacebuilding. There was a contention that there is a need to map institutional evidence not just for institutional memory, but to also identify who else is engaging in similar work - to allow for meaningful collaboration. There was also the question of power interests related to the production of evidence or knowledge on faith actors, governance and peacebuilding, where a conclusion was made on the need to prioritise local voices and interventions. This could be achieved in various ways, through seminars, webinars, reports, workshops, publications, activations, media outreach (including social media), creative and cultural events such as music and art and public forums.

The Uganda Listening Dialogue concluded that there is a significant role played by faith actors in governance and peacebuilding, yet the work is not reflected in research and evidence. A consensus was reached about the need for institutional collaboration across the board. There was also an agreement that local institutions - both government and community - should lead the implementation of faith, peacebuilding and governance programs, in order to create synergy and genuine cooperation at the regional level amongst themselves and the relevant state and regional institutions within the countries and regions they are located.

Tanzania's dialogue revealed the extent to which locally produced knowledge is externally driven by foreign institutions (some with their own interests and agendas) and the scarcity of locally produced evidence on faith, peacebuilding, and governance, at least at the academic and scientific research level of publication. The extent to which contributions from faith-based institutions and works of civil societies on faith, governance and peacebuilding remains largely undocumented.

Following the Listening Dialogues, and the establishment of the East Africa Hub, Hub members discussed and agreed on the need for a scoping study which mapped current evidence and trends on local faith actors in governance and peacebuilding. Collectively, Hub members agreed on the scope and methodology of the study which followed (which forms the basis of this report). The collaborative nature of the study's methodology, whereby Hub members actively participated in contributing to the literature review, KIs, and case studies, as well as reviewing drafts of the report to agree on findings and recommendations, can therefore be contextualised in the study's origins as a collaborative, joint learning form of research.

Methodological Approach

The study used qualitative methods, including desk analysis that focused on literature around faith, peacebuilding, and governance, as well as descriptive case studies, and KIs.

The research team examined a sample of 17 key documents as part of evidence mapping, including books, reports, journal articles, and academic theses. The literature review sought to unpack the evidence concerning the role of faith actors in peacebuilding and governance in East Africa, as well as establish the extent to which literature concerning faith, governance, and peacebuilding in East Africa has been locally-produced.

Ten key informants were interviewed in each target country of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, and included faith actors, members of civil society organisations, and state agents or policy makers, purposely sampled by the research team. Participants were issued with consent forms which they agreed to and signed before they were engaged in the interview. Data was collected between the months of September and November 2022. Case studies were developed utilising the desk literature of secondary sources. One case study was used for each of the three East African countries, with Uganda having two cases that focus on the ARLPI in the conflict in Northern Uganda.

This scoping study directly engaged members of the JLI East Africa Learning Hub on Governance, Peacebuilding, and Local Faith Actors for data collection and validation of findings. For example, Hub members were invited to share literature and resources to inform the literature review and case study, as well as propose participants for the key informant interviews. Hub members were provided regular updates and findings from the research as it unfolded between September and December 2022, and invited to ask questions or provide feedback. Further validation sessions were conducted providing hub members with another chance to review findings and the finalised report in general. Feedback from these sessions was incorporated in this version of the report.

The study was not without limitations. Some of the limitations of the study were resource constraints, poor cooperation at the regional level and delayed feedback from respondents. Nevertheless, the findings corroborated assumptions raised at the Listening Dialogues and were mainly related to the following key issues: *Local evidence production, collaboration, financial constraints, Political/state interference, partisanship, and capacity building.*

Pan-African Theoretical Conceptualization: Indigeneous Scholarship on Governance and Peacebuilding

The sections call for an approach to governance and peacebuilding that embodies the call for “African solutions to African problems” - an approach that is rooted in pan-African and indigenous values such as *utu/ubuntu* (humanity), *umoja* (unity) and *harambee* (collective responsibility or pulling together), as well as African conflict resolution mechanisms such as dialogue, restorative justice, communal mechanisms, and mediation.

In 1992, following the end of the Cold War, then United Nation Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali presented his Agenda for Democratization and Agenda for Peace, which laid the foundations for a new era where liberal peacebuilding dominated global responses to conflict (Aubyn, 2018). These approaches were rooted in Western models of democratic governance being supported and implemented in conflict-affected nations, including across the African continent.

In the three decades since, vibrant bodies of African scholarship have emerged, examining the application of democratic governance and peacebuilding in African contexts. Aubyn notes the proliferation of courses at African universities, academic journals, conferences, and research institutes dedicated to conflict and peacebuilding in Africa (Aubyn, 2018). Over the past two decades, a growing number African scholars of peace and conflict have pointed to the shortcomings of Western-led liberal peacebuilding approaches: namely, the imposition of a “one-size-fits-all” approach to peace, disconnected from local cultures, traditions, and social structures, has proven to not only be unsustainable in building peace, but can actually exacerbate tensions and future conflict- for example, the periodic violence that can characterize democratic transitions, often leading to death and destruction of property and economic downturn (Aubyn, 2018).

Increasingly, African scholars of peacebuilding have called for more contextualized and localized approaches to peacebuilding, with some highlighting the need to amplify and mainstream indigenous African approaches to peacebuilding, such as open assembly,



oath, covenant making, and the use of traditional councils involving elders and clan leaders (Ejike et al., 2022). Aubyn notes that despite the rich literature on peacebuilding advanced by African scholars, African scholars have not offered anything qualitatively different from their counterparts elsewhere, noting that the majority of African scholars of peacebuilding had been educated according to Western academic scholars and literature (Aubyn, 2018). Yet, a survey of the literature has found renewed investigations into indigenous governance and peacebuilding mechanisms, with a view to mainstream them into peacebuilding practices across the continent.

These calls are situated within the broader movement of decolonisation, of decentralising Western approaches in favour of indigenous traditions, with some scholars highlighting that the roots of many conflicts in the African continent can be found in colonial legacies of violence, exploitation, and political and social divisions (Genger et al., 2020). Ejike highlights the need to return to African traditional religions in order to identify contextually-appropriate governance and peacebuilding mechanisms, while Genger speaks to the unifying power of concepts like ubuntu in advancing African-led discourses on peacebuilding and governance (Genger et al., 2020). “The Local Turn,” Wolff (2022) therefore prioritises the central role of local infrastructure for peace, and institutional governance models that speak to the African reality. The local turn in peacebuilding studies represents an explicit and important attempt to transform both the research on and the practice of international peacebuilding with the aim of incorporating views, experiences, and practices from the Global South and, thereby, overcome the predominance of Western concepts and templates in the practice and scholarship of international peace operations (Wolff, 2022). This also means that faith actors, as local members of the civil society, therefore play a critical role in advancing and implementing indigenous and local approaches to peacebuilding and governance.

Noting the gap between the current, dominant African literature on peacebuilding, which is still rooted in Western norms, and yet has limited influence on Western policy, and the need to further research, implement, and mainstream indigenous approaches to peacebuilding, Genger calls on African scholars to lead efforts to take ownership of the task of producing knowledge on indigenous approaches, in partnership with communities, as well as calling on African policymakers to support knowledge production forums such as seminars, workshops, and conferences to ensure research is translated into practice (Genger et al., 2020).



Therefore, literature on faith, governance and peacebuilding and attendant practical approaches to solving peace and governance issues in East Africa must then be decolonised for meaningful engagement with nuanced data that can influence policy and practice in East Africa for the benefit of East Africa's ecology (Wolff, 2022). For example, there needs to be a discussion that shifts Africa's positionality from merely recipients of knowledge and development aid in North –South relations to that of equal partners, employing African epistemic positions and gnosis into understanding peacebuilding and governance in a manner that shape and influence global policy debates as parallel systems of knowledge and not inferior systems, in order to build “the Africa we want”. At the helm of this mantra should be a revival of a robust conversation regarding our idea of Africa as Africans, as opposed to the “invention” of Africa by the colonial perspectives of others.

Literature Review

The literature on faith-based peacebuilding in the three East African countries under consideration (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) is rich with evidence of local, national, transnational, and international efforts. In the following literature review, we pull out dominating trends in these peacebuilding efforts across the countries. Overall, the literature points to the fact that despite or perhaps because of the relationship of religion and conflict in the region, faith-based approaches to peacebuilding exist and are necessary but have yet to reach their full potential.

Limitations

This literature review was guided by several implicit assertions. Given that our purpose was not to discuss if faith-based peacebuilding is possible or positive, most of the sources take this conclusion for granted. Instead of asking if these interventions are positive, we asked how they are and how they can be improved.

We also worked to prioritise local sources as much as possible, operating with the assumption that local interventions (whose problematic definition we will explore more below) are generally preferred, even while the utility and necessity of transnational and international interventions cannot be completely ignored.

Finally, our sources' use of the term faith-based in practice includes little more than interventions by various denominations of Christianity and some Islam; in some cases, other traditions such as African Traditional Religion² (ATR), the Bahá'í Faith, and Hinduism are briefly mentioned (Githigaro, 2012; IRCP, 2010; World Faiths Development Dialogue, 2015). This limiting understanding of faith-based work in the literature likely has much to do with, first, the high numbers and ecumenical nature of Christians and Muslims in East Africa and, second, the intimate history of Christian and Muslim relationships with humanitarian intervention, governance in Africa, and conflict.

The Roots of Faith-Based Success

According to the literature, faith actors and organizations are well-placed to do and document the kind of work sought by peacebuilders. These interventions often consist of providing humanitarian aid like food and shelter, increasing dialogue between various

2. This is another complicated and homogenizing term generally including practices of witchcraft and spirit possession among others.



stakeholders, hosting workshops on peacebuilding, educating the public on topics like civic education, and reintegrating former militants into society. According to the sources, faith-based institutions are often the ultimate mediators, accessing the very grassroots of society, while also being politically recognizable and therefore active in negotiations with the state. Moreover, many faith groups can draw on regional and international communities in their peacebuilding work, accessing funds, resources, and attention otherwise unavailable (Decano, 2011; Githigaro, 2012; Khadiagala, 2001; Mbillah, 2008; Ntale, 2012). Finally, the literature spotlights faith-based leaders as legitimate sources of peacebuilding both from their explicit and generally coherent ethical and moral codes and from their claim on divine authority (Chepkorir, 2019; Elfversson, 2016; Githigaro, 2012).

The Roots of Faith-Based Limitations

Despite undeniable success in peacebuilding, many faith-based peacebuilding efforts face challenges that inhibit their full potential. While the situation in each country is unique, the literature also brings forth two main shared challenges that span the region.

The first of these is the common legacy of colonialism and postcolonial independence. Across Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, colonial bureaucracy left deep divisions between different communities, many of which were exacerbated during post-colonial independence when resources (namely, land) and political power fell along uneven lines. Today, this has led to systematic inequalities between various groups so that ethnic divides often parallel those of political, economic, cultural, and religious identities. For our purpose, tensions between Christians and Muslims in the region are just one, albeit important, example of division stretching back to the colonial era that continues to fuel conflict today (Allen, 2005; Banchoff et al., 2019; Elfverssen, 2016; Khadiagala, 2001; Shalom-SCCRR, 2020; World Faiths Development Dialogue; 2016). Thus, faith-based peacebuilders face the difficult task of solving conflicts that are centuries old, systemically embedded, and intimately present in their own religious communities, whose members and leaders may contribute to conflict based on the same moral code and divine authority peacebuilders themselves claim.

The second challenge religious peacebuilders face in the region, particularly in their role as mediators, is a lack of collaboration between various societal bodies including the state, civil society groups, and differing religious traditions. This is not to say there are no examples of collaboration between these groups—for the literature contained many—but it is a continuous challenge to facilitate teamwork amongst these competing interests.

First, the literature considered the relationship between the state, various religious bodies, and conflict. The state, while not the only available form of governance (Elfversson, 2016), is inextricably involved in conflict, either as peacebuilder, instigator, or both. The tools of the state, such as its security apparatus, governing authority, and international negotiating capacity, are sources of resolution but also of provocation. Consider election violence in Kenya (Githigaro, 2012; Shalom-SCCRR, 2020; World Faiths Development Dialogue, 2016), where politicians stoked ethnic and religious tensions in bids for political power. Consider further the state-perpetuated violence in Northern Uganda that, while an effort to provide security for the area, has done more than its fair share to contribute to its instability and marginalization (Allen, 2005; Khadiagala, 2001). Finally, note the Tanzanian state's reputation of overlooking religious contributions and needs, particularly in the Muslim community, fostering distrust and tensions between the state and Christians and Muslims alike (Banchoff et al., 2019). In all three countries, collaboration with or recognition from the state is necessary for the most effective faith-based peacebuilding, but, according to the literature, religious organizations often find themselves frustrated within this at times volatile relationship.

On the other hand, collaboration with the “local,” the “grassroots,” and the “civil society”—words used interchangeably in the literature to refer to what is an extremely complex nexus of differing layering of relationships—is no easier for faith-based peacebuilders than working with the state. We have already mentioned longstanding tensions in the region between Christians and Muslims, but beyond these there are also tensions between different denominations and communities within each of these diverse faiths. Certainly, interfaith efforts across both denomination and tradition are widely recognized as necessary (Inter Religious Council for Peace and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2010; Mbillah, 2008; Shalom-SCCRR, 2020; Shauri and Mbugua, 2021; World Faiths Development Dialogue, 2015; World Faiths Development Dialogue, 2016) but are far more difficult in practice. According to some, religious leaders and communities must work to heal themselves just as much as they must work to heal others (Githigaro, 2012; World Faiths Development Dialogue, 2015). As an example, World Faiths Development Dialogue (2016) describes a growing faith-based peacebuilding field in Kenya, but one that is rife with a lack of coordination except at the highly institutionalized level and a brain-drain of successful local actors to bigger NGOs and INGOs, leaving disjointed and inexperienced efforts at the community level.

An even starker example of the challenge faith-based actors face due to a lack of collaboration between various societal bodies is the case of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), an interfaith group formed of Catholics, Pentecostals,



Protestants, and Muslims doing peacebuilding work in Northern Uganda. Khadigala (2001) and Ntale (2012) characterize the ARLPI as an exemplary instance of the success of faith-based peacebuilding, crediting them with mediating between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), turning what was depicted as a Northern problem into a national and even regional problem, and facilitating community reintegration of ex-LRA soldiers. However, both sources also mention the tensions the organization faces, torn between, on the one hand, independence as an autonomous body and, on the other, sufficient recognition by the state in order to do effective peacebuilding work. This is paralleled by tensions with other local leaders, such as the Acholi elders, who feel ARLPI is a threat for local control in Northern Uganda. Ntale (2012) goes so far as to note that even if a church is in a local community, it is not necessarily as deeply embedded in as it might initially appear. This pushes back against the simple binaries of government-civil society, national-local, or state-grassroots. Thus, we have a situation of multiple, non-collaborated interests and bids for leadership crisscrossing the many uneven layers of society, of which faith-based groups like the ARLPI are a part, creating difficulties in effective peacebuilding.

Conclusion

In the end, the literature is rife with examples of the success of faith-based peacebuilders, who are highlighted as particularly disposed to this work for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is their history of experience in the sector, their moral codes, and their capacity to mediate the various layers of society. Yet, the literature also notes the limitations faith-based peacebuilders face, including the conflict-ridden history tracing from the times of colonization through to the post-independence societies of the present, and the lack of collaboration between various societal bodies, including the state, various religious communities, and different parts of civil society. This conclusion reflects the central theme of this scoping study that the faith-based peacebuilding is existent but hindered by a lack of coherence, cooperation, and support in gathering and producing evidence of their existence.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Role of Faith Actors in Peacebuilding and Governance

The study team conducted KIIs to get views of faith actors, academics, civil society members, policy makers and state officials in peacebuilding and governance. While it was easier to get faith actors, academics and civil society members to respond, it was particularly challenging to get hold of policy makers and government officials, echoing one of the key concerns and gaps in this study regarding the involvement of policy makers in the work of faith and peacebuilding.

This echoes the general discourse emerging in the responses from the key informant interviews, which was political interference from government officials and politicians - despite, as this study contends, their responsibility to play a central role in creating a safe space for faith and peacebuilding work. It remains to be seen if policy engagement, for example in the form of policy roundtables, could help further elucidate the reasons for this apparent gap between policy, practice and research. Further, the findings indicated a disjointed approach to the work of faith in relation to peacebuilding and governance, due to critical stakeholders operating in silos which limit their contribution in peacebuilding. There is a strong notion in the findings that stakeholders should collaborate to create coordinated mechanisms, generate evidence, build their capacity through knowledge sharing and networking, avoid replication and, above all, mobilize much needed resources for peacebuilding. Indeed, financial constraints emerged as one of the most crucial challenges in faith and peacebuilding across the board in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

Moreover, the interviews shed light onto the policy environment regarding the role of faith actors in peacebuilding. Regarding the policy environment and legal framework, it became clear that as much as governments need to partner with faith actors and support them in their efforts related to peacebuilding and governance, governmental partnerships often operate in a weak regulatory policy environment that can lead to political pressure and intimidation of faith actors while executing their mandate. Therefore, there need to be robust policy frameworks that guide cooperation between faith actors, government officials and other political leaders in the spirit of mutual respect and separation of powers between state and religion.



Finally, the idea of partisanship featured prominently. The interviews revealed the notion of faith actors failing to be objective about their support for various contentious political issues. This often interferes with public perception about faith actors' neutrality in the communities they serve, eroding public trust and consequently, affecting their peacebuilding efforts negatively. There was a general agreement that faith actors should rely on evidence through research to not only implement practical interventions, but to also work flexibly with academics, policy makers and civil society groups in their efforts to generate evidence. However, the fact that faith actors have limited capacity to document their work, let alone conduct research, stresses the need for collaboration to build their capacity to document the good work that they do, and be able to find appropriate channels to communicate what they do to have an impact on grassroots communities. This could be achievable through training courses, workshops, and dialogue events.

The key informant interviews revealed that faith actors and institutions play two key roles in peacebuilding and governance: firstly, they are actively involved in evidence generation and secondly in program implementation. In the former, some faith actors who are also academics are involved in the production of evidence. In the latter, faith actors have practically contributed to humanitarian support, lobbying for various legislations, electoral support and observation, youth and women empowerment programs, construction of facilities such as schools, health services and churches, rehabilitation programmes, as well as spiritual nourishment through their daily roles of preaching the gospel to communities across the board.

From our research, faith actors champion locally-led peacebuilding interventions, as highlighted by the examples of Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK), the Youth Muslim Council and the Anglican Diocese of Zanzibar.

Faith Actors' Role in Promoting Dialogue, Mediating Conflict, Advocating for Unity, and Promoting Human Rights

The interviews revealed that local faith actors in various parts of Africa have been leading efforts in the area of promoting peace and interfaith dialogue. They have created stability during fragile times in countries like South Africa, through the works of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to East Africa through works of Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARPI) and the National Church Council of Kenya (NCCK). This role of faith actors is highlighted by the following quotes from the KIs:

“Faith actors using religion may promote peace in the development of interfaith dialogue. This is a relatively new phenomenon, and it involves religious leaders repressing groups in conflict, developing lines of communications between hostile parties, removing a climate of fear, and developing common ethical principles. Interfaith dialogue enables religious leaders to deal with even the thorniest issues in conflict in a manner that their secular counterparts could only envy and therefore leading to peace making.”

“Faith actors can play a vital role in peace building and create stability in situations of fragility and conflict. A most famous example is, of course, Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was a role model for peace and reconciliation in post-Apartheid South Africa. Other examples are the religious leaders of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) in Northern Uganda which helped in bringing peace.”

“Faith actors act as mediators and advocates for peace and reconciliation through interfaith dialogues that help diffuse tensions that might lead to conflict escalation.”

“The role of state actors is to provide linkage between the different faiths and the general community together to foster lasting peace and good governance among all peace actors in the society. Faith actors have promoted reconciliation, facilitate citizen learning through civil education...”

“Faith actors have a role in promoting human life values, mediating conflict and providing the non-partisan voice of reason during conflicts. They also compliment government efforts in service delivery e.g., health care and education.”

Faith actors therefore help restore eroding public trust in democratic governance in large parts of Africa, which has been caused by misgovernance, and widespread problems resulting from it, such as violent extremism, corruption, and marginalization. In Uganda for example, faith actors have been involved in peacebuilding by bringing different religious factions together:

“Faith actors play key roles in building peace among the various Muslim factions that we have; e.g. in Uganda the various conflicts among the Muslim community have been addressed by the faith actors.”

“They have also been greatly involved in spreading the gospel of peace all over the world referring to teachings in the Quran and this has greatly impacted a majority of populations to live in faith, peace and harmony.”

“In governance, faith actors have formed various coalitions with government institutions, and [these] are aimed at bridging some gaps in matters of human rights, rule of law.”

As change agents for the realization of peace, faith actors have, over the years, championed the key pillars of a peace-focused agenda, which includes human rights, justice and inclusivity, as evidenced in the following response:

“First and foremost, in the peace building aspect, faith actors advocate for equality of all humankind. With that due course, they mediate during conflicts through spreading the gospel of unity in times of political turmoil, civil wars for example. There are a lot of FBOs engaged in various peace missions all over the world, e.g. the UN peace mission in both Africa and Asian states. In governance, FBOs have engaged in multiple activities with various governments, such as participation in election processes through playing a role in election observations during election times. They also advocate for rule of law in various states; e.g., in Uganda faith actors have been involved directly and indirectly with policy makers before some laws are tabled and passed in the parliament. This has been through dialogues.”

The interviews revealed that faith actors are often perceived to understand the value of unity among communities and nations and the need to be inclusive and to protect human rights. They therefore use their spiritual influence anchored on the belief in one God to help create an agenda for peace aimed at helping ensure a more peaceful and prosperous society. This point is highlighted in the following quotes from the KIs:

“Faith actors preach about unity among populations and this has created peace in a number of regions. The influence of faith actors has seen a number of peacekeeping missions established in war torn areas such as Somalia, and [as] far as Asia. ...Faith actors preach unity in different religions. They want people to understand that no matter the different faiths, religions we all have one Almighty God... They have rallied behind people to be peaceful during their pastoral activities”

“In governance, they also write to governments in case of any unjustifiable cause that doesn't not go well with humanity, e.g. [as] is the case [with] torture in various states by state authorities. The faith actors rise and always stand tall against such acts... They fight against discriminatory politics where there is regional imbalance because one region has different political affiliations to the other.”

In addition, it was pointed out that faith actors have supported various initiatives in collaboration with government, to help create opportunities for victims of conflict as part of an effort to protect human rights.

“Faith actors have been key in peace building by ensuring peace in society through various ways: creating reconciliation forums in times of conflicts, advocating for unity among Christians and Muslims. They also play a big role in mediation processes both in courts of law and outside the courts of law. In the governance aspect, faith actors advocate for honesty, integrity among leaders in big offices. They are involved in preaching about the bad vice of corruption in government institutions. There is a need for transparency among leaders. This is seen in radio and televised adverts they have put up for. They foster better rule of law by not being partisan in government decisions and in that they push for human rights for the masses. By promoting equality among men and women, FBOs have greatly impacted a positive role for women emancipation in society. A lot of women have been able to attain higher

higher learning doctorates, as opposed to the past years when women wouldn't go much further in education. They have pushed for a better girl child environment, engaged in a lot of livelihood activities through various programs and this has greatly led to improved standards of living among the communities.”

“Local faith structures, such as churches and mosques, are sometimes the only remaining structures in situations of fragility. The influence of these religious social institutions ranges from Catholic churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo providing shelter and basic services such as health care and education, to mosques in Mali encouraging dialogue on religious tolerance and acting as peace brokers or mediators between conflicting parties hence bringing peace.”

Faith Actors' role in Advancing Research and Generating Evidence

As opposed to popular assumptions in public discourse that faith actors are not actively involved in evidence production, this study revealed that in fact, faith actors are making significant contributions to the generation of locally rooted evidence. Future research could investigate the extent to which programs by faith actors are guided by such evidence. Evidence-based interventions led by faith actors may be particularly likely to realize their full potential in advancing peace in local communities, due to the greater proximity, trust, and understanding local faith actors have with local communities. This has been evidenced in cases where faith-based studies have resulted in legislation and policy changes that ultimately impact on governance. For example, in Tanzania, faith actors shaped legislation and policy around mining and averted conflict as shown in the following excerpt from the interviews:

“...the role of faith actors is first to create knowledge and build capacity for the communities to understand the issues through training and preaching through different methods, but at least to ensure that communities understand the cause and know how to deal with it. Another thing is that they need enough research and information for policy development in governance, corruption issues, or other issues that pertain to communities, hence they need knowledge, and enough information to address issues and understand the community, so they should conduct evidence-based research. Examples: in 2009 in Tanzania there was a sitting on interfaith standing committee, and we have been working serious[ly] on extracts. And in 2009 in the North

Mara gold mine actually, the tailing dam poured water to the communities. The communities were affected. The land was affected with poisonous waters and the faith actors had to undertake some action. First, research. Second ... as the research unfolded and they documented information to show what happened, to engage with companies, the government, the parliamentarians to bring the change that we see in the communities. And actually they were able to influence the Mining Act. Also they were able to influence social responsibility, and through that the company had to provide clean water to the communities.”

The interviews revealed that researchers and academics generally valued the role of faith actors. Knowledge dissemination took place in the form of reports with research findings being shared, in order to help faith actors lobby for public support of policy change recommendations. Interviewees referred to the following example from Tanzania:

“All these were academics, and researchers from universities who brought in knowledge. The research was here, and one had to present it to the bishops and sheiks to build their capacity to understand the issue and the findings of the research. As I have previously stated, we collaborate with the government and parliamentarians to push for reforms and develop laws. The Mining Act, the Insurance Policy, and the Political Parties Act are examples. Why? Because we believe in collaboration. Another example is the serious engagement we have with the president's calls, in which faith actors discuss various issues. I have seen them talking in dialogues and I can show things that they have really gained out of these dialogues - from the late former president Benjamin Mkapa to former president Jakaya Kikwete and also the late president Magufuli when we had the Bagamoyo issue on extremism and terrorism.”

Clearly, faith actors play a critical role in peacebuilding and governance in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. However, the research also revealed that their role is not free from challenges, which continue to undermine faith actors promising potential in peacebuilding and governance in the region.

Challenges Facing Faith and Peacebuilding Work

There are at least five main challenges facing the work of faith, governance and peacebuilding, illustrated by the following KII quotes:



Financial Constraints

“They are not doing enough because they have limited understanding, knowledge, and financial resources. There are issues with faith-based organizations that would like to do so but lack the resources to do so...”

“FBOs need a lot of support from stakeholders in various aspects: financially...”

“Since our voices are voices of peace, good governance and justice, there is a need to give more credit and concern on matters concerning faith actors; providing available support to these faith actors to enable them to run day to day activities...”

“There should be awareness to popularise the role of faith actors in society - financial support [is key].”



Political Pressure

“Government should not dictate to them; they should be able to operate without any government interference, wanting them to do things in their favour...”

“Faith actors are very important in society, and they need to be given a platform to enable people to realise and identify the work of these voices. By supporting them in any form e.g., financially, motivationally. They also need to operate independently from the state, to avoid being manipulated.”



Partisanship

“the state should give them a peaceful environment to do their work, e.g., in most cases the state wants faith actors to actively participate in partisan politics...”

“Faith actors have a role in promoting human life values, mediating conflict and providing the non-partisan voice of reason during conflicts. They also compliment government efforts in service delivery, e.g., health care and education.”



A Lack of Information

“They need enough research and information for policy development in governance, corruption issues, or other issues that pertain to communities. Hence, they need knowledge and enough information to address issues and understand the community. So, they should conduct evidence-based research”



Donor Pressure

“I look back to a time when NCKK was started many years back. For instance, they requested for a moratorium where they said that it was time for westerners to give space for Africans to take leadership of these organizations. That was largely adopted, and we saw Africans take leadership of these faith organizations including NCKK. At the time, there was a clear cut in terms of the influence of the church in the west and what was happening in the South as much as we still function as a church unit. I, however, see the influence of those who fund various activities. Even in cases where we have faith-based funders, they still find ways to influence what agenda they want to drive. The trends in the West keep on shifting, and so they keep trying to impose the same in the South.”

Case Studies: Measuring Success of Faith, Peacebuilding, and Governance

In addition to KIs, this research is based on case studies focused on Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania that are provided here to allow for a deeper exploration of some of the key issues surrounding faith actors, peacebuilding and governance in East Africa. The case studies provide an opportunity to examine and establish the extent of the contribution, challenges and opportunities of faith-driven interventions. They illustrate examples of successful faith-driven work which can be attributed to collaboration between different faith actors (inter and intra religious), academics, civil society, and policy makers. Nevertheless, challenges remain, especially in the areas of broader policy regulatory frameworks, both at national and regional levels. The coordination of efforts presents another challenge, often arising out of uncertainty of whether the political environment will afford a safe space for the work of faith, peacebuilding and governance.

Kenya and Tanzania (Zanzibar)

Halimu and Mbugua's study (2011) on "Nurturing Peaceful Co-existence through Interfaith Collaboration-Responses to Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kenya and Zanzibar" examined intervention by the Faith Action Network's Community Rich in Diversity Project. Faith Action Network is a consortium of partners that includes the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa, African Council of Religious Leaders, Religions for Peace and All Africa Conference of Churches. In this case, Faith Action Network is a mobiliser faith-based organization that offers support for family health, wellbeing, and peaceful coexistence. It is a global interfaith network of more than 110 Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu and Muslim faith organizations, emphasizing the centrality of cooperation and networking.

Based on desk research and institutional analysis, the study examined local evidence production. It concluded that while there is a substantial amount of local evidence on faith, peacebuilding, governance and development produced by local authors, the adoption of recommendations from these studies in practical interventions is often lacking. The case studies, therefore, gave a practical example of the level of success

that can be achieved when interventions are supported through locally generated evidence, such as on local peacebuilding infrastructures or traditions, policy frameworks and coordinated collaborative approaches.

Halimu Shauri and Patrick Mbugua are local authors in a project implemented with support from the European Union, providing an example for local involvement in evidence generation. The project was implemented in six African countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi, an example of regional cooperation and collaboration that is essential in faith and peacebuilding. It relied on a range of creative and collaborative approaches, highlighting their usefulness for. The cases examined the activities of two faith organizations, the Anglican Diocese of Zanzibar (ADZ) and the Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance (KMYA). The project dealt with one of the most pressing peace and security issues in the region which is violent extremism perpetrated by radicalized youth. The two organizations recognized the potential threats of violent extremism in democratic societies. They sought innovative approaches to respond to violent extremist organizations by going beyond the securitization and “economic push and pull” frameworks, instead prioritizing interfaith collaborative activities to foster peaceful co-existence.

The work of the ADZ and KMYA’s interfaith activities nurtured peaceful co-existence and responded to radicalization and violent extremism in Kenya and Tanzania. KMYA promoted peaceful co-existence in Mombasa and Kilifi Counties to reduce tension between Muslims and Christians following interreligious attacks. The ADZ too developed a similar approach for Zanzibar, an island linked to prominent terrorist attacks globally (Halimu and Mbugua, 2011).

Some of the activities that were used by KMYA and ADZ include the following:

- Training of trainers
- Peer-led cascaded training
- Mentoring sessions for young clergies
- Youth led and community leader accountability forums on interfaith collaboration
- Grassroots youth led dialogues
- Peace caravans
- Awareness seminars
- Stakeholder meetings
- Distribution of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials
- Shaping public discourse through media coverage
- Visibility online platforms and social media pages

These activities led to four outcomes that were used to measure success levels. These were:

- Amplified voices against radicalization and violent extremism
- Enhanced community peacebuilding
- Shaping public discourses- increased respect for religious diversity and promotion of tolerance
- Building youth resilience-Increase in youth embracing cultural and religious diversity

This case uncovers a different approach to research on the involvement of youth in religious tensions, radicalization, and violent extremism. While many studies have considered youth as both perpetrators and victims of violence, less attention has been given to their involvement in the promotion of peaceful co-existence. This means that young men and women are excluded from peace interventions and conflict management processes.

Primary data from Mombasa and Kilifi in Kenya, and Ugunja and Pemba in Zanzibar, was examined to assess the role of youth in resolution of religious tensions, reduction of radicalization and violent extremism and promotion of peaceful co-existence. The study called for the exploitation of interfaith relations by stakeholders - such as KMYA and the ADZ - for peacebuilding to bolster efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. A comprehensive analysis of projects from KMYA and ADZ in Kenya and Zanzibar respectively was done.

While the government of Tanzania's counterterrorism strategy primarily focuses on "hard" approaches to political violence such as military interventions, the government of Kenya's strategy emphasises strategic prevention, or "soft" approaches (focused on dialogue and education). One of the key pillars of the soft approach is ideology where the role of faith actors is exploited through County Engagement Forums, demonstrating how potential recruits can be dissuaded from engaging in violent extremism through careful messaging, awareness-raising, and education. Some of the other pillars include education, media work, psycho-social and economic support. These pillars deal with critical aspects of social well-being that eventually influence the individual and his or her environment, thereby acting as enablers and disablers of violent extremism. The ideological pillar, for instance, touches on the self and the potential influence from ideas, including extreme ideas found in social, cultural, religious, or political matters and general questions of faith.



Both strategies centre communities in their theories of change - communities being central ingredients in the uptake and success of peacebuilding interventions.

The KMYA and the ADZ's evidence driven programming demonstrated the power of partnership and successful enhancement of collaborative activities, whose aim was to promote peaceful co-existence. It serves as an example of good practice for other initiatives working for peaceful co-existence. The project used creative communication strategies, including edutainment, performance art, peer education, capacity building and community peacebuilding to create understanding, tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity, explaining how alternative traditional approaches can raise success levels. Most importantly, was the inclusion of partners from the inception of the project, tool development baseline, project monitoring and exit surveys. The projects by KMYA and ADZ brought to the fore the power of participatory approaches in peacebuilding, which enhance community ownership and support for local interventions. The case concludes that if interfaith collaboration is enhanced in the phase of radicalization and violent extremism among the youth in Kenya and Zanzibar, then peaceful co-existence will equally be enhanced.

Kenya

This case study focuses on the subject of electoral politics in Kenya, which is one of the predominant conflict pressure points in the region. The case study relies on a study entitled Faith Based Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, produced by Githigaro Mwangi (2012). The article explores the peacebuilding contribution of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) following the post 2007 elections in Kenya. It appraises the increasingly active role of NCCCK in peacebuilding in Kenya, indicating how it was positively involved in areas of humanitarian assistance and building bridges among communities divided by the 2007 post-election violence. Further, the study contextualizes the triggers of violence and offers suggestions for peaceful co-existence. It contributes to the debate on the role of faith-based diplomacy that blends the role of religious leaders and spiritual leaders in conflict management and resolution which has been neglected in the study of international relations (Githigaro, 2012).

NCCCK has experience in areas of peacebuilding that includes border conflict and the 1992, 1997 and 2007 ethnic clashes. NCCCK contends that peace in Kenya has been immensely affected by ethnic animosity as a result of underlying causes such as inequitable access to land, historical injustices and proliferation of small arms and weapons (see NCCCK progress report January to June 2008 in Githigaro, 2012).



The findings, which are based on accounts shared by NCKK staff and document analysis, reveal some of the leading causes of post-election violence. These include: economic marginalization, structural inequalities, deep seated tribalism and ethnic divisions, unresolved land issues and youth unemployment. The NCKK's efforts after the eruption of violence included the provision of food and non-food items, provision of psychological support to address issues of trauma occasioned by loss of life and injury, rescue operation of those marooned in violence and ferrying them to safety, and medical assistance for rape victims.

NCKK can be credited for its involvement in many activities that contributed towards peacebuilding in the aftermath of deadly post-election violence in 2007/08. For example, the NCKK was involved in policy advocacy influencing the passage of key legislations such as the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Act, National Cohesion and Integration Act of 2008 and the Witness Protection Act in Parliament pointing to the salience of FBOs in peacebuilding and governance.

Respondents in the case study generally agreed that FBOs have credibility and command respect of their faithful because they seem to have been mandated by God to be peacemakers and to live in peace with all people...However, a lack of financial resources to meet the high demands of peacebuilding interventions emerged as a major setback for NCKK peacebuilding work. The other challenge is division in the church, which speaks to the question of partisanship and foreign influence related to donor support that may constrain the work of faith and peacebuilding, where the church becomes partisan about a central issue of concern. For example, in the 2007/08 dispute, the church was bitterly divided prior to, and after, the violence, and therefore needed to go through a period of internal healing before it could be effective in building the bridges to peace among bitterly divided communities.

Conclusively, although the disputed presidential results came forth as a major cause of the violence in the NCKK's case study, the land reform program was seen as insensitive to inter-ethnic relations and remained a hot spot for violence in future if not addressed. The case also recommended the need for supporting women, peace initiatives and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation and handshake as rationalized in the theoretical conceptualization of this report.

Uganda

The last case study provided here is based on the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, which speaks to decades of war in Northern Uganda, authored by two Ugandans; James O. Latigo and Rt. Bishop Macleod Baker Ochola.

The case of Uganda demonstrates how faith actors are champions of peace at grassroots community levels. The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) is an interdenominational body bringing together Catholics, Anglicans, Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Seventh Day Adventists, and born-again Faith Federation Worshipers under one umbrella. During the 1990s conflict in Northern Uganda, ARLPI supported community mobilization and became an intermediary between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) commanders and the government (Latigo and Ochola, 2015). They became an important voice of peace in the absence of other credible brokers.

The LRA emerged after the overthrow of the military junta in Northern Uganda in 1986 by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA). Consequently, several armed groups emerged in Acholi land in Northern Uganda to resist the new regime including the Uganda People's Democratic Movement/Army (UPDM/A), and the Holy Spirit Movement by Alice Auma Lakwena. The Holy Spirit Movement lost in 1987 and the UPDM/A concluded a settlement with the government, but the dissatisfied remnants of both groups came together from 1987 in what would later be known as LRA, led by Joseph Koni.

In this context, the ARLPI tried to build peace by acting as an intermediary between the government and LRA commanders, but the suspicion between the two groups meant that they could not succeed in reaching an agreement. However, the initiative registered a few successes that are worth mentioning. For example, in 1997, the religious leaders, many of whom had been personally affected by the conflict, came together to speak against the violence.

The ARLPI encouraged dialogue and resolved that the LRA conflict could not be solved using military intervention. They helped bring national and international attention to the conflict despite the government's attempt to contain the situation as domestic. ARLPI led an advocacy team to the US, Canada and Europe promoting a research report by the Africa Study Center and Human Rights and Peace Center at Makerere University titled *The Hidden War, The Forgotten People: War in Acholiland and its Ramification in Peace and Security in Northern Uganda*, which highlighted the issue internationally and

put pressure on Museveni's government. They also brought international attention and subsequent support to night commuters (which are children spending the night in the streets for fear of abduction by LRA). The government eventually called a seven-day ceasefire to enable Betty Bigambo, the then State Minister for Northern Uganda, to pursue talks with support from the US, UK and the Netherlands. However, hostility continued again due to suspicion (Latigo and Ochola, 2015).

The ARLPI members were invited to attend peace talks between the government of Uganda and the LRA as observers, and in turn informed the community on the progress - thereby encouraging public support to the peace process through negotiations.

Unfortunately, the leadership of the LRA is currently scattered between Western Equatoria, Southern Sudan, the DRC, the Central African Republic and the Darfur region of Southern Sudan, making a peaceful resolution to the conflict even more complicated for faith actors due to its regional and international dimension. Nevertheless, the ARLPI with sister churches and traditional organizations in Uganda, Southern Sudan, DRC, and CAR have formed a Regional Task Force on the LRA supported by international NGOs to continue pursuing possible resumption of peace talks.

The biggest role therefore that the ARLPI played was supporting a traditional Acholi Reconciliation Process (Mato Oput) that consisted of truth, forgiveness, justice and reconciliation, preparing the community to receive former combatants and promoting amnesty law through translating and distributing Lwo (Luo) versions. The ARLPI also strengthened community resilience and unity in the face of extreme violence and burdening people's confidence and willingness to support the peace process. The case studies were examined on whether they could help comment on the success of the contribution of faith, peacebuilding and governance in Uganda despite the challenges faced such as financial constraints, political interference and partisanship. The case revealed how ARLPI leveraged on the opportunities presented through local evidence production that enabled them build trust both at the grassroots level, to government cycles, rebel groups and internationally to successfully restore some semblance of peace in Northern Uganda.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that there is a significant amount of local evidence on faith, peacebuilding, governance, and development but no convincing evidence about how recommendations made from the local evidence are adopted at the policy and practical level to transform peacebuilding, governance and development at the grassroots level. This is however due to the disjointed nature of how key stakeholders; faith actors, academics, and policy makers work, making some promising interventions fizzle out. These collaboration gaps mean that there should be proper policy formulation that would guide cooperation and coordination mechanisms as well as protect the work of faith actors and collaborators from political interference (create safe spaces for the work of faith and peacebuilding). When proper coordination mechanisms are in place, they can help in maximizing existing financial resources since this would avoid duplication of efforts and interventions.

Clearly, one of the biggest challenges facing in the work of faith, peacebuilding governance and development is financial, implying that there is a serious challenge in effectively managing limited financial resources from donors in a disjointed environment and a context characterized by the shrinking donor funding capacity. It is therefore recommended that there should be more collaborations in the form of networks and consortiums in the work of faith actors, peacebuilding, governance and development to build capacity, share knowledge and ideas, maximize limited resources and increase the impact of interventions that should be locally driven and through local evidence production. This should be done creatively in a manner that not only exploits technology but also appreciates cultural expressions found in music, arts and cultural strategies to drive change from the grassroots upwards and outwards. The cooperation between the JLI East Africa hub and the Hidden Peacebuilders Network provides an excellent opportunity for conceiving a model that should be adopted and supported going forward to make the work of faith, governance, peacebuilding and development successful for posterity.

The study therefore makes the following key recommendations:

- Mechanisms for concrete coordination between local faith actors, governments, researchers, and civil society organisations must be established to enable improved cooperation, mainstreaming of best practice, and appropriate support for local faith actors engaging in governance and peacebuilding.
- There is a need to build the evidence on indigenous and local religious approaches to addressing governance and peacebuilding challenges. Local faith actors should be supported to actively contribute to evidence generation, for example through financial aid to conduct research, training to build research capacity, or removing barriers to publishing and dissemination of locally-led research.
- International donors and researchers should support the research priorities of local institutions (including faith actors, civil society, and academia) and be cautious to avoid imposing their own policy or research priorities on local actors.
- International humanitarian actors, national and regional governments, universities, and faith actors, must invest in forums for sharing learnings on the multiple roles faith actors play in governance and peacebuilding,
- Research and evidence on governance and peacebuilding should be made more accessible for local faith actors and grassroots communities. To this end, faith actors should be supported to use different strategies for creative, effective, and evidence-based engagement with grassroots communities such as through music, arts and cultural strategies.

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