



An End Child Poverty Update 28 August 2017  
**JEUNESSE CONNECT**

**Our Advocacy Journey Towards the Implementation and the Ratification of the Maputo Protocol**



Laws and policies significantly define and sustain gender norms by clearly establishing a country's national priorities and setting aside resources for their implementation. The policy environment in most conflict and post-conflict countries often lacks laws and policies aimed at addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Advocacy against GBV aims at influencing decision makers to bring about change at policy and structural levels in order to bring sustainable change at the social level.

In Africa, there is a broad set of national and regional policies meant to make people's lives better – however with a poor rate of effective implementation. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on Women's Rights (Maputo Protocol), adopted in 2003, is one of the most progressive international legislations preventing and protecting women from violence, together with the Istanbul Convention (2005) for Europe and the Bélem do Pará (1994) for Latin America. Its full implementation would put an end to GBV in the continent.

In light of the above, when consulted, REJADH youth opted to lead its first advocacy campaign entitled "Myth of Maputo" towards the

A Word From  
**Fred Nyabera**  
 Director, End Child Poverty



Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a universal vice that threatens women and girls, as well as boys and men in all regions of the world. While the scourge of GBV is receiving much more attention internationally – as illustrated by UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, and 1888 – preventing GBV is a complex challenge.

Against this background, Arigatou International together with NCA and other regional partners has come up with a Regional Advocacy Strategy (RAS) against GBV in Burundi, DRC, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan. The strategy looks at GBV and its effect on children and youth and aims to empower the young people in building their own strategies to prevent, identify and respond to GBV within their respective countries. It is within this framework that we held a four-day seminar termed ACTION! Consultations were held together with twenty-seven youth from the above-mentioned countries to strengthen their advocacy activities against GBV.

As you will see in this newsletter, the need to tackle gender-based violence is urgent, and the role of faith communities and youth in addressing it is key to its elimination.

ratification and implementation of the Protocol. Such legislations are usually unknown from the larger public and from (too) many decision makers. Hence, the network started by gathering knowledge on the state of ratification in the five countries, the legal value of the Protocol in each country and the position of decision makers regarding the said Protocol. They also gathered information about the position of influential religious leaders who are often main obstacles to the ratification and/or implementation of the text. The second and continuous step is to build positive dialogue with decision makers. In all countries, the network has been spending time and efforts in making the network and its objectives known and in getting support for their action and objectives from decision makers. In some countries, such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the members of REJADH have also been participating in the development of faith-based platforms for gender justice – known as Side by Side.

The network is currently in a phase of adapting its strategies to the specific context of each country with achievable objectives related to the regional campaign. Efforts are now being deployed to get commitments from relevant decision makers and to hold them accountable until the change sought is realized.



## About REJADH

The African Youth and Children’s Network for Human Rights (YCNR)/ Réseau des Enfants et Jeunes Africains pour les Droits Humains (REJADH), supported by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and Arigatou International—Nairobi (AI—N), in collaboration with Changemaker and Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre, gathers young women and men aged between 13 and 30 advocating by themselves and for themselves, tackling inequalities and injustice. The network seeks to advocate for gender equality and women’s empowerment in Burundi, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia and South Sudan. The Maputo Protocol forms the policy backbone upon which this advocacy is mounted, coupled with Agenda 2063 and the African Youth Charter. REJADH focuses on youth mentorship, training and advocacy campaigning focused on reducing, preventing and ending GBV, which is one of the most prevalent forms of gender injustices in these countries.



## About End Child Poverty

End Child Poverty is a multi-faith, child centered, global initiative of Arigatou International that mobilises faith-inspired resources to end child poverty by addressing both the structural and the root causes of poverty in the human heart. Together with the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), Ethics Education for Children and Prayer and Action for Children, we form the four initiatives of Arigatou International.



## Responding to the 5th Forum on Ending Violence Against Children by Putting an END to GBV

Arigatou International recently convened its 5th Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), 9th – 11th May 2017 in Panama; bringing together nearly 500 young persons and faith actors from 70 countries. It was an opportunity for us and our partners, to genuinely reflect and make solid commitments towards ending violence against children.

GBV negatively impacts children and youth from all religious traditions, whether they are from a rich or poor background and regardless of their sex, race or ethnicity. GBV has also been used as a weapon of war in many conflict situations.

We need to ask ourselves, as transformed faith communities, how can we put a stop to this, once and for all? How can we resolutely take action to end this form of violence against young people?

It is encouraging to see the young leaders of the REJADH responding to this challenge, by wholeheartedly advocating against GBV. It is my hope that we will, as faith communities, keep supporting such powerful initiatives and live up to our promises made at the GNRC 5th Forum.

—Ms. Nyambura Gichuki, Programs Officer, End Child Poverty

The GNRC 5<sup>th</sup> Forum  
**#EndChildViolence**

A Word From

### The GBV Desk: Stacy Ndungu

Consultant on Gender Based Violence,  
Arigatou International - End Child Poverty



Welcome to our third edition of Jenuesse Connect, a newsletter where we will share on Arigatou International Nairobi's Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Reduction programme. This issue mainly features the activities of the ACTION seminar held in Naivasha, Kenya from 19th to 22nd June 2017, by the African Youth and Children Network for Human Rights (YCNH) / Réseau des Enfants et Jeunes Africains pour les Droits Humains (REJADH).

When people hear the word gender they (sometimes) assume it only refers to a woman. Gender rather, refers to the roles, responsibilities and behaviors that our society expects of both men and women. It is safe to say that most acts of gender based violence are directed towards women and children. GBV does not only affect the individuals who are abused. It also affects children, families, communities and the entire nation at large. In fact, GBV largely slows down the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs) in general and particularly goal number five "Gender Equality".

As long as there is an imbalance of power between men and women, GBV will continue. We must act towards the prevention of GBV to promote safe, peaceful and productive families and communities. This will in turn enable us to achieve Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 that focuses on 'An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children'.

Finally, we must reflect on whether young people are our future leaders or if indeed they are our current leaders. We believe young people are our current leaders! They are vibrant and passionate about building a better tomorrow not only for themselves but for all including our children. Young people should therefore be provided with opportunities that empower them to do the latter.

Happy reading!

# Achievements and Progress Made by REJADH Youth



A Word From  
**The NCA Desk: Solene Brabant**

Regional GBV Advocacy Officer,  
Norwegian Church Aid



Working with young people is an indisputable added value. Around the world and in Africa, the youth is the fastest growing population and unfortunately, a population facing many challenges such as unemployment, GBV and lack of consideration of their voices in political arenas. University is often a luxury and diplomas do not guarantee a job. These challenges are exacerbated in conflict and post conflict contexts where the State is weakened or unable to perform its duties towards its population, where security is an everyday concern and where priorities are put elsewhere than with young people. Politicians are often old leaders that exclude the youth as valuable interlocutors. However, we can observe a change in the strong mobilization of the youth within the civil society that expresses a will for change and that got more attention these last couple of years. In regional and sub regional platforms, space is being created for youth voices. For the first time, the 28th African Union Summit that took place in January 2017 organized a youth consultation to gather recommendations from African youth that was channelled to African Ministers' meetings.

Young people are highly affected by GBV – in their homes, in schools, in the streets, etc. GBV denies them opportunities and can take away their potential. Young people can be perpetrators too. It is difficult to eradicate GBV without actively including them. Youth can also have a strong impact within faith institutions that often participate in perpetration and continuation of GBV by keeping the silence. They are given space in faith youth groups; they are themselves strong believers and represent a high percentage of religious leaders audiences. As such, rather than remaining passive believers, they have the power to influence their religious communities and to get support from their religious leaders to eradicate GBV.

## Action Seminar

ACTION is a regional camp that brought together African youth with the aim of connecting and reinforcing the regional ties of the network.

The young REJADH leaders shared knowledge and experiences from each other as well as gained understanding from experts who facilitated various sessions on different topics relevant to REJADH work and youth activism with regard to reducing GBV. The seminar also provided opportunity for experts to discuss synergies with the young leaders and give regional directions towards the advocacy campaign.

Taking note of the fact that all REJADH members come from conflict and post conflict settings, the organizers noted the importance of bringing them together to remind them that whatever they go through, they are not alone and they have friends and support. Gaining confidence enables them to advocate more efficiently, to realize that youth have potential and that their voices matter and must be heard and considered by decision makers. ACTION! reminded REJADH members altogether that alone, they might feel powerless, but together, they can change the world!



## Positive Masculinity

Youth members participated in a panel discussion, which provided an opportunity for the young people to share on their understanding of positive masculinity as well as debate on their actions as positive men role models.



## Courageous Leadership

Youth must be very courageous when talking about gender based violence and peace, a leader must motivate, give people hope and offer opportunities to others.

— *Moses Omondi, Life and Peace Institute*



## Youth Must Inject Themselves into the System and Act!

Beyond meetings, we need to inject ourselves in the system and act! The first step is to learn, gather knowledge about the topic of interest. Then, it is thinking about ideas, together with others and come up with a common position. The third step is to internalize the knowledge until as activists we think, breathe and leave the topic chosen.

—*Carol Kiiru, Kenya Youth Climate Network (KYCN)*



## Arigatou International, Programs Desk

Advocacy is one of our primary strategies to end child poverty and build a better world for all children. Advocacy gives power and amplifies the voice of the community, so that we can bring about the much needed change in our societies.

By mentoring and supporting REJADH, Arigatou International—End Child Poverty is widening the space for young women and men to take the lead in advocacy towards ending gender based violence, a key driver of child poverty.

In the past year we have mentored REJADH and seen them grow in numbers and strength. The young leaders have gained skills and confidence; and made impressive strides in implementing the Myth of Maputo Campaign.

Moving forward, we invite you to partner with us and help REJADH speak louder, step further and keep championing change.



## The TAMAR Circle

Religious institutions are uniquely placed in society to play a decisive role in the prevention and elimination of the different forms of violence against women and children. These institutions possess the moral authority, responsibility and capacity to minister to the needs of those who have been abused, deal with the perpetrators as well as help in the process of prevention and elimination of GBV.

The Tamar campaign seeks to acknowledge the existence of gender based violence in our society, with particular focus on sexual violence.

The campaign's primary goal is therefore, to work towards the prevention and elimination of sexual violence with an emphasis on allowing the readers to read and interpret the text within their own context, cultural background, and life experience, all with the aim of achieving personal and societal transformation.

Some of the interpretations by the various country groups on the TAMAR story were:

- Society judges survivors rather than assisting and supporting,
- Acts of sexual violence are sometimes perpetrated by relatives,
- Rape and sexual violence is considered a taboo topic in religious institutions

All participants agreed that survivors must have the courage to speak out and that they must always be heard. It is a shared responsibility and common obligation to protect women from sexual abuse.



## The Panel Discussion

A panel discussion on Gender and Religion took place with Rev. Fred Nyabera moderating the session.

Fr. Evanjelos Thiani, Priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church, teaches theology and development studies. He is also the chair for Side by Side Kenya.

He shared on his perspectives, as a Christian, about the issues of Gender, GBV and religion. He talked about the importance of female leadership, both in the society and in church. "If we can teach about God, who we cannot see, why can we not teach about things we can see and experience?"

Abdikarim Hassan gave his perspective, as a Muslim, about the issues of Gender, GBV and religion.

The Quran is neutral with regards to gender issues in the world today. "Allah does not talk about gender issues, it is taken back to the actions of human kind. Islam has never differentiated men and women."

Dr. Lydia Mwaniki works with the AACC as the Head of the Theology, Family Life and Gender Justice Department, and is a priest in the Anglican Church.

The problem of GBV has impacted children and youth negatively. She gave a sense of the breadth and scale of this challenge and how best young people can collaborate with religious leaders in pursuing gender justice. GBV is viewed as a human rights breach, and a problem for development, especially with regards to women and children.

Dr. Grace Wamae Ngare said, religious leaders have often been seen as part of the problem, but they can also be part of the solution in the advancement of gender equality. The society does not have the opportunity to question religious leaders, because they are power. "Why is religion, being so powerful, not able to overcome these difficulties? Why does culture overcome religion?"



## Responsibilities and Actions Required from Youth Advocates

Young people are obligated to take action to end violence against women and girls in all its forms. It's everybody's business to change harmful gender stereotypes about women and girls and men and boys that perpetuate discrimination and limit opportunities for women and girls to achieve their full potential. How engaged are you as a youth? Any special measures you have undertaken to accelerate progress towards a violence free society to guarantee full enjoyment of women and girls rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of society? ACT AND SHARE EXPERIENCES NOW!!

— Arnold Ambundo, ACT Alliance



## The Idea Behind the ACTION Youth Camp!

My engagement in Changemaker started in 2007. I was 14 years old, and so eager to contribute to change in the world. I was so intrigued by international politics, by the unjust systems nobody seemed to care about, and the opportunity to demand for change. However, there was also another aspect of Changemaker that I fell in love with; the social relations that I made through my engagement. Especially on the summer and autumn camps, which in Norway are called *Sommer Snu* (SNU), I had the time of my life, and grew and learned in an informal and inspiring environment.

By creating ACTION! we wanted to bring aspects from Changemaker's *Sommer Snu* to REJADH. Young people engaged with advocacy work are a special group. We are not yet professionals, but we still deal with a lot of complex and difficult topics and processes, and it is something we do in our own free time. Thus, it is truly important to have fun with what we do. If we manage to learn and grow in ways different from those we are used to, the knowledge will settle in us differently. I believe engaging in youth advocacy involves the entire human, and therefore we must strive to explore different topics and skills to grow as advocates.

The week in Naivasha was truly amazing, and I went home with a warm heart and a big smile. It was so much fun to get to know each other even better, so interesting to listen to the stories you told, and so inspiring to listen to the sessions some of you facilitated, to the questions you asked, to the discussions we had and to share great new memories.

—Thea (Changemaker)

## Outcomes

The youth were able to gain knowledge and understanding on:

- What it takes to become a good leader
- How to influence and follow up with decision makers on commitments towards eradication of GBV

The young people recharged their commitment towards ending GBV





## Take Home Lessons from the Youth Led Sessions

The youth were provided with the opportunity to facilitate various sessions. All youth sessions created safe spaces where the young people shared their own experiences and personal stories.

### Good Manners

It is important for young leaders to act as models because people are looking up to them. Young leaders must also show respect to every individual in the community.

*Gratias and Sophie, Democratic Republic of Congo*

### Gender and Girls' Empowerment

As long as the perceptions we have of each other are not harmonious, there are always going to be divisions in society and impediments to development.

*Gratias, Democratic Republic of Congo*

## Voices of the Youth

### Good Management of Emotions

Decision is a choice made among different possibilities. It is important that a decision is optimal, rational and fair, and in order to achieve this, one needs to be positive and creative.

*REJADH Burundi*

### Leadership

The lack of empathy is a key indicator of a poor leader. If the person cannot seem to put him or herself in another person's shoes and see things from a different perspective, they will never be a truly great leader.

*Gabriel, South Sudan*

### Rural Development in South Sudan

Education is the key, but the education system in the country is not good enough. They don't have any clean water, the women need to walk up to 10 km every day to get water and the water from UN is not good enough. In 2016 the government worked with Chinese companies to develop a system that would bring water to all residents, but the war interrupted the work. It is hard to get any land to own and that is one of the reasons for the lack of food.

*Karama, South Sudan*

## Closing Ceremony

Volunteers from REJADH organised the closing ceremony. It included traditional dances, poems and songs from different countries. Closing speeches from both participants and organizers were also given and finally gifts were presented to all participants. The ceremony ended in laughter and dance.



## Upcoming Events



Burundi



DRC



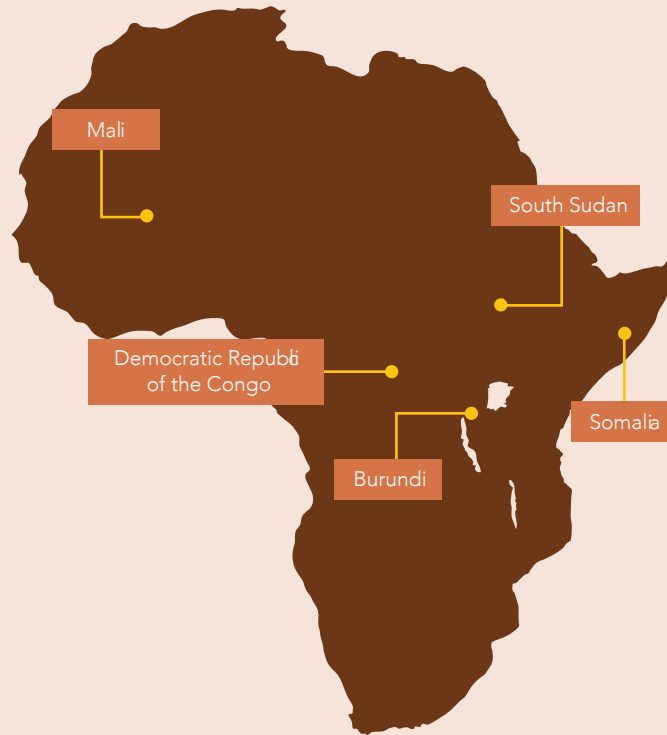
Mali



South Sudan



Somalia



## Something we are particularly looking forward to... *16 Days of Activism*

16 Days of Activism against gender based violence is an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. The campaign runs every year from 25<sup>th</sup> November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10<sup>th</sup> December, Human Rights Day.

Join the conversation online via our hashtags:

#MaputoIsASolution

#ReligionAgainstGBV

#REJADH4Maputo



**"Gender Based Violence  
anywhere is a threat to peace  
and security everywhere."**

—John F. Kerry

**Special Thanks to:**



**Arigatou International - End Child Poverty**

Arigatou International – Global Network of Religions for Children

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