



on LOCATION

Nairobi, Kenya



An End Child Poverty Update, 20th September 2016

Regional Youth Forum on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)



YOUTH CAN INSPIRE OLDER GENERATIONS!

Addressing the participants, Ms. Wasye Musyoni, Programme Manager, Norwegian Church Aid highlighted the importance of doing away with the era of “gerontocracy” where the older generations are favoured irrespective of their capacity or lack thereof, while the young people are placed at the background during solutions and decision making processes in the society. She recognized the centrality of faith inspired resources in bringing peace, stability and development to the region.



“We must find within ourselves the willingness to rise above the religious, political and ethnic influences and divisions which compromise neutrality and ability to work with a common accord.” - Wasye Musyoni

The major actors involved in violent extremism are vulnerable youth in unstable areas. This is especially the case in the Eastern Africa region. To this end, Arigatou International – Nairobi in collaboration with the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and ICCO Cooperation facilitated a three day regional reflection forum, that sort to foster a deeper understanding of the drivers of youth radicalization into violent extremism in the region, and to generate recommendations aimed at sensitizing people working with youth to address the topic, utilizing youth-centered approaches and intra/interfaith initiatives.

The Forum is part of a five year Regional Peace Programme (RPP) that seeks to enhance mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and harmonious relations between religious and other groups.

The meeting took place from the 29th to 31st of August 2016 at the at Methodist Guest House and Conference Centre, Nairobi - Kenya. The forum brought together 60 young persons and youth influencers from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia and Uganda.

Theme That Guided The Forum:
“Deepening Cooperation in Countering Violent Extremism.”



Violent Extremism is one of the biggest challenges facing humanity today. Several factors push and pull youth towards violent extremism. It is important to understand these drivers so as to prevent it.

Leadership is not in title, but influence

Fred Nyabera, Arigatou International's Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty (End Child Poverty) Director, defined conflict as some form of friction that is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, or pursue their interests through actions that damage other parties. "Differences in viewpoint are inevitable and often enriching. Therefore, as peace builders we should see differences as a resource, leading to a wider understanding of a problem and an improvement to the present situation. While these differences can lead to conflicts, not all conflicts are violent" He said.

He further explained that although radicalization into violent extremism can happen at any age, young people in search of a sense of belonging, purpose, identity and meaningful livelihoods may be more vulnerable to violent extremism and terrorist radicalization.



The youths can be manipulated or used negatively, however they are not the problem. The solution can always come from the young people and the children, because leadership is not in title, but influence. You are a leader when you bring positive influence in your communities and other places where you find yourself.

- Rev. Fred Nyabera.



Partnerships >>>



The Context of Violent Extremism and Interfaith Relations in Eastern Africa



Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome, BRAVE Reference Committee Chairman, explained that radical thinking is not problematic in itself; it becomes a problem when those radicalized engage in violence or use violence to promote political, ideological or religious extremism. This is then referred to as radicalization leading to VIOLENT EXTREMISM that is one of the greatest challenges to

security in the region and a threat to peaceful co-existence and all aspects of life.

Of relevant importance is that discussion on violent extremism within the region is not complete without discussing religion. Why? "Because the main violent extremist group in the region and its international partners are increasingly using religion to radicalize youth into VE; to justify their terror activities, deliberately use terrorism to cause religious conflict and increase targeting members of the 'religious other'." This negatively affects interfaith relationship, which has enabled people to live peacefully both at individual and institutional levels within the region.

In countering violent extremism, Dr. Kiplagat, Network and Programs Manager, Global Network of Religions for Children, clarified that all actors must partner with youth leaders, youth workers and youth influencers to jointly address the challenges. Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, donors, international and inter-governmental agencies, among others should create a platform in which they are able to work together with the youth in CVE.



"Building partnerships with individuals, families, communities and various government agencies makes communities more resilient to violent extremism."

- Dr. Dorcas Kiplagat

Narratives and Counter Narratives in Countering Violent Extremism

"Violent extremism counter narratives are powerful resources for influencing target audiences."

– Sheikh Ramadhan Aula



"Religious communities have a lot of resources that can be used to engage in active peace building." - Gwen Berge



The Role of the Kenya National Counter Terrorism Centre

Participants interacted with Mr. Ombaka from the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and discussed the role of NCTC in CVE.

The NCTC, which is different from the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), was formed in 2004 and comprises of several agencies such as the ATPU, the police, the Secret Service among others. It has the mandate of:

- Sensitization, informing, training, and building resilience against CVE
- Coordinating all counter terrorism efforts in the country, and
- Formulation of strategies

He further informed participants that the Centre uses a soft approach that aims at working with entities on the ground to build resilience of key vulnerable groups such as the youths against the possibility of being recruited by terrorists.



Reflections and Action!

The participants took time to visit two places of worship to learn from, and share experiences. The places visited were Jamia Mosque in the city Centre, and the International Christian Centre in Nairobi West.

During the interfaith visit, they had the opportunity to interact with religious leaders, and learn more about their community development programmes. After the visit, participants had a debriefing session to share impressions of the realities they observed during their visit in relation to CVE.



The visits also enabled participants to learn, appreciate and respect the religion of the 'other' while focusing on the connectors that religion offers in peace building. Through interfaith dialogue and community action, it is hoped that the youth from Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, vowed to boldly take steps to build peace and counter violent extremism in their respective countries.



"Africa is a region of great ethnic and religious diversities but often, these diversities are politicized resulting in identity conflicts that have generated massacres, genocides and terror. I appeal to young people to use this resource to bring peace in our region."

– Ms. Wasye Musyoni

The forum welcomed the diversity of the participants as a solid base on which to build the necessary collaborative interaction for the full legitimacy of decision-making within their respective countries. Participants agreed to explore areas of partnership that can quickly bear fruits of peace as well as long-term investments on Countering Violent Extremism.

Finally, the participants reaffirmed their collective commitment to continue to deepening their engagement to counter violent extremism, promote positive transformation of societies and economies, and to advance the pursuit of fair, just and tolerant societies in which all can live a life of dignity and opportunity.



VOICES FROM THE YOUTH

Someone has to take the initiative in dealing with conflict. Like Wangari Maathai said "let us be like the humming bird that tries in its little way to put out the forest fire".

As people of different faiths, there are more factors that unite us, than those that divide us.

In order to solve our problems, we have to take ownership of the problem. It is important that we talk about these issues and look at our own fault in it.

Young people should participate in policy and strategy development. It is our common responsibility to engage with various stakeholders in doing so.

The importance of documentation should be emphasized so that programs and actions can progress without interruption due to change in leadership

Ignorance breeds fear! We need to go above the barrier to understand the other person, even though it takes courage to do so.

Despite our differences we can still live together. For we may love our kind, but until we interact with others we may not understand and love the other.

Women and children are very important in peace building. They play a significant role that must not be ignored.


















Patience is important in conflict transformation.

We should be encouraged to indicate that we have some things in common with people of other faiths, thus promoting our connecting factors.

If someone who is being lured by terrorist groups comes to you for guidance, the best way you can handle the person's safety and security is by contacting the National Counter Terrorism Centre in Kenya.



REFLECTIONS!

-  Emphasis should be put on preventive rather than reactive measures to counter Violent Extremism.
-  There is need to promote interfaith spaces and approaches that promote tolerance and build key skills – such as critical thinking, dialogue and peaceful co- existence/conflict resolution.
-  There is need to work consistently and closely with youth influencers, who may act as messengers, change-makers, or inspiration for their peers.
-  Attention should be given to the gender specific drivers of radicalization into violent extremism.
-  Working with the soft approach – wing of the government is strategic in CVE.
-  Knowledge of existing legal and policy frame works on CVE is critical.
-  Policies and measures to counter violent extremism among youth should never be discriminatory, in their design or implementation, against any individuals based on religious, racial or ethnic characteristics.
-  Issues of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization fuel radicalization into violent extremism.
-  The need for credible alternatives to violent extremism that foster feelings of belonging to society, providing access to social services as well as employment opportunities to young people and enabling their active participation in public life including through civic and democratic engagement are key to CVE.
-  Methods and tools which appeal to youth should be used in CVE among young people. These include music, sports, media and especially social media, mentoring programmes, role models.
-  There is a need to identify key messengers, such as victims and former violent extremists, within communities and build their capacities towards CVE.
-  Young people need safe spaces in which they can proactively raise their concerns and react to events related to violent extremism and terrorism;
-  Develop and disseminate locally tailored counter-narratives and promote alternative and role models;
-  Employment opportunities and psychological support should be provided to vulnerable individuals;
-  There is a need for a community of practice / networks of young activists that are trained in advocacy for policy and social change. This would include online campaigning against intolerance and discrimination and developing counter-narratives - linking online and offline initiatives to maximize impact.
-  Similar training should be facilitated for youth in 'at-risk' populations.
-  The workshop organizers should accompany the participants and monitor the implementation of their action plans.

The forum concluded with the presentation of country action plans, by the youth participants, followed by a cultural dinner event.





Religion and our diverse cultures can be a unifying factor in Peace building - Joel Muita Daniel



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