



YOUTH IN ACTION 2021

Social Cohesion and Conflict Transformation In Communities



ARIGATOU
INTERNATIONAL
All for Children

| End
Child Poverty



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
actalliance



WHO WE ARE

End Child Poverty

Arigatou International - End Child Poverty (AI - ECP) mobilizes faith communities and faith-inspired resources to help build a world free of child poverty. AI - ECP addresses the root causes of poverty in the human heart, and the structural causes of poverty in society. This is accomplished through promoting theological reflection and action, advocacy, knowledge-sharing, and community-driven initiatives at grassroots and global levels to assist children in poverty. End Child Poverty invites people of faith and good will to work together to end child poverty worldwide.

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FORWARD



Fred Nyabera

Director, End Child Poverty,
Arigatou International

Since inception of the Regional Peace Programme (RPP) in 2016, AI - ECP has anchored the Youth In Action (YIA) network on four main pillars namely: growth, mentorship, foresight and creativity.

These pillars have been progressively and consistently accomplished through; training, storytelling for change, experience sharing and taking practical actions in communities. By building on foresight, we also introduced the youth to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and the importance of peaceful co-existence in communities.

This year's, YIA focused on respect for others in diversity by identifying the challenges that communities are facing in promoting FoRB/social cohesion.

I am confident that this diverse network of young leaders will sharpen creativity, enrich skills/knowledge and embolden actions towards promoting social cohesion in their communities and the Eastern Africa and Africa Great Lakes Region at large.

NEW COHORT



Drawn from the Eastern Africa and Africa Great Lakes Region, 27 young leaders from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, gathered in Kenya with one objective - promoting peace in the region. This was a new cohort of youths selected from Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. This took place in a week-long forum held from 12th - 17th July 2021.

While welcoming the young leaders to the network, the Director, AI - ECP, Fred Nyabera lauded them as a great group of young people who have the potential to change the region.

"I believe you will develop a clear vision for yourself, your country and your community" he emphasized. He also challenged the youth to be innovative and present themselves as assets towards peacebuilding.

In his address to the youth, the Secretary General of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, expressed confidence that through YIA, the young leaders are better placed to be peace ambassadors in their communities and the region.

"The world is really looking up to youth to move the peace agenda forward"

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali

The manager of the Regional Peace Programme, Maria Osula similarly lauded the new cohort as a brilliant and active group of young people that are positioned to lead peace in their communities.

While being introduced to the network, the youth were taken through an understanding of social cohesion within the lens of FoRB. The aim was to get the youth to gain an understanding of the significance of FoRB towards peace building and the need to embrace each others' religious beliefs as a way of promoting peaceful coexistence in communities.



Youth and Violent Extremism

The forum also reflected on violent extremism in the region with a view of rallying efforts among the new cohort to aid in preventing and countering violent extremism; thus promoting peace. It further underscored that youth have become the easiest targets for radicalization into violent extremism, citing some of the causes of violent extremism as; intra-faith and inter-faith intolerance, misinterpretation and misuse of religious scriptures to justify violence, misuse of social media platforms to spread extremist narratives. Ineffective strategies to positively tap into the youth energies, and direct them into constructive and non-violent actions were also discussed.

To understand why youth are often lured into violent extremism, the forum discussed some of the push and pull factors. Some of these factors include: poor governance, historical injustices, prospect for fame/glory, lack of sensitivity to people's religion among others.

Why we work with young people?

Young people are;

- Innovative and adaptive
- Creative
- Assets in peacebuilding
- Able to ensure social stability
- The majority in the world's population
- Strong agents for development



ACTION

Country Action Plans

During the forum, youth developed their country action plans which detailed what they plan to do after the forum. The action planning session was important because it gave AI - ECP an idea of how the youth want to use the knowledge gained. Below is a brief of what they came up with:



UGANDA

Empowering and engaging Youth positively so as to build a better, sustainable and equitable world.



KENYA

Identify the effects of parenting and determine their influence on social cohesion, FoRB and violent extremism



SOUTH SUDAN

Fostering FoRB and Social Cohesion through awareness and capacity building



SOMALIA and ETHIOPIA

Select religious base conflict-prone areas and engage youth, religious leaders and the government in dialouge on peaceful coexistence.



TANZANIA

Promoting FoRB and Social Cohesion through media and social interactions



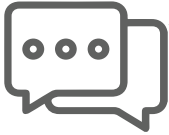
SUDAN

A focus on awarness, traning and research on FoRB and social cohesion. Establish a peace centre.



Youth Speak

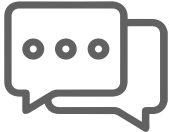
On their vision within Youth In Action:



"I believe I can lead. I hope to lead. I am a leader" Lillian Nakang, South Sudan

"I believe in wellness and mindfulness. I hope to leave this place better than I came"

Ahmednoor Haji, Kenya



"I believe I can, I hope for better future. I am strong" Doris Namatovu, Uganda

"I hope for positive interactions. I am for peace" Muna Abdi, Somalia



"I believe the Youth In Action 2021 team can make the world a better place" Ivy Joan, Kenya

"I believe in peaceful co-existence. I hope to empower fellow youth into positive actions"

Busime Shadrack, Uganda



"I believe these sessions will be very interactive and full of lessons" Yeabsra Minwyelet, Ethiopia

"We as youth encourage governments to take proactive steps to ensure that these groups are safe and protected." Sarah Gabriel, Sudan



Youths Perspective on FoRB, Peacebuilding, and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE)

- Religion is being used as a tool to promote discrimination in society. This has in many instances led to conflict and violent extremism. A better understanding of FoRB and promoting FoRB in communities can lead to effective PCVE and peacebuilding.
- Disinformation affects FoRB, Peacebuilding, and PCVE. Addressing disinformation will go a long way to support peace in local communities.
- In situations of conflict or violations of FoRB, one area to look at is what connects the people within the community. Sometimes even using the fact that they are humans can go a long way to provide valuable and sustainable solutions to community problems.
- Capacity building can be a useful methodology to promote FoRB, Peacebuilding, and PCVE. Targeted capacity building can be implemented focusing on the needs of the community.
- When minorities within a country are marginalized, the easiest way is to respond with violence. However, in every situation, there are people on the majority side who can be allies in mobilizing for change. Identifying these allies is important as they can be the bridge to resolving community conflicts.



“There is need to reduce inequality by including people from all or no faiths in community peace building and having equality among all members of a society”
Ilhan, Kenya

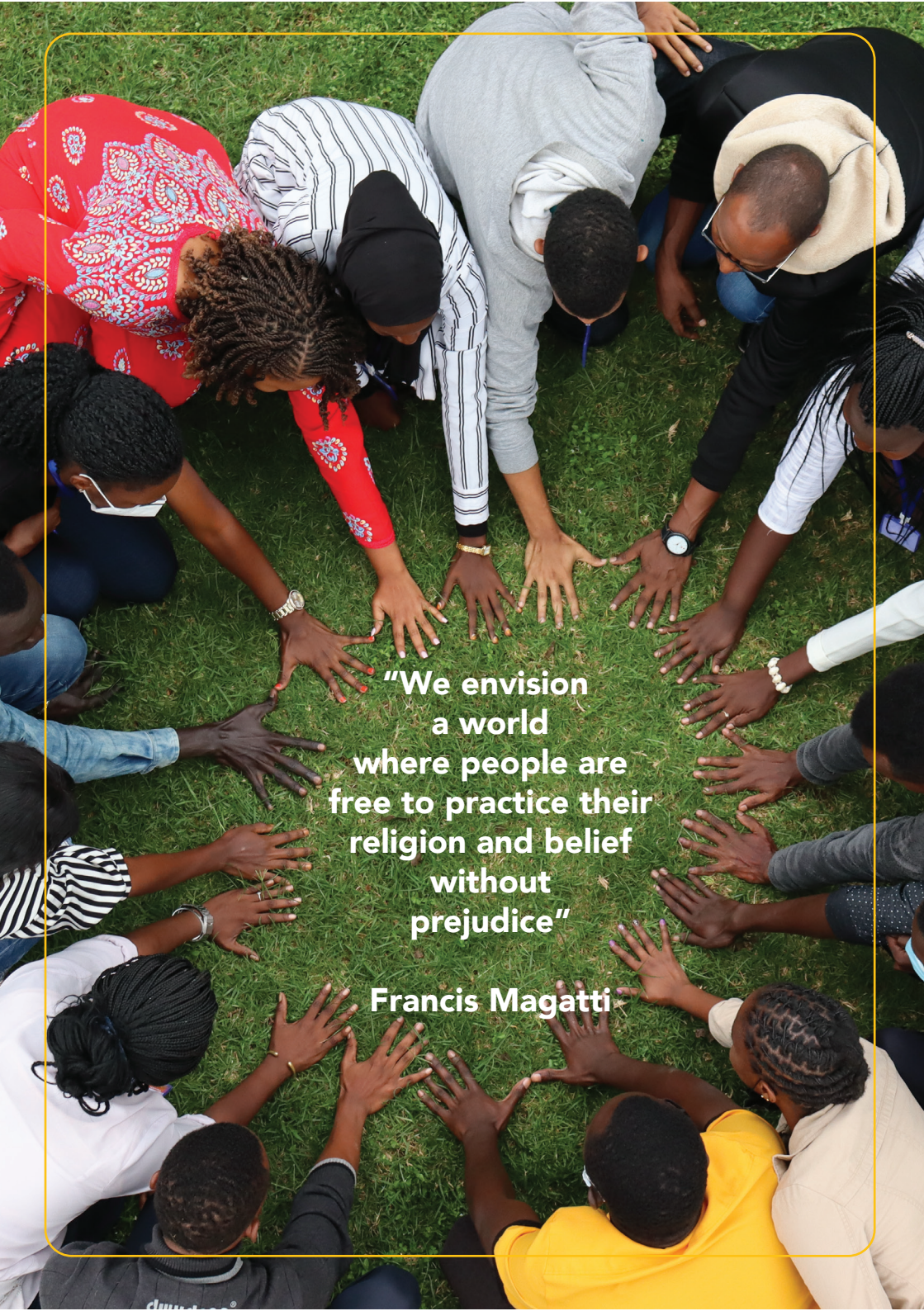
What we are working towards as YOUTH!

A cohesive society whereby the uniqueness of everyone is appreciated



"Reducing poverty in society will reduce the chances of youth and children's involvement in violent activities. This is simply because many young people engage in these activities as a means of survival. It is safe to say that the absence of poverty enhances social cohesion"

**Beatrice George,
Tanzania**

A high-angle, top-down photograph of a diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, kneeling in a circle on a green lawn. They are all leaning forward with their hands flat on the grass, touching in the center. The group is composed of individuals of different ages and backgrounds, creating a sense of global unity. The image is framed by a thin yellow border.

**"We envision
a world
where people are
free to practice their
religion and belief
without
prejudice"**

Francis Magatti

ABOUT YOUTH IN ACTION

Youth In Action is a network of peace builders, comprising of youth and young influencers from 12 countries in Eastern Africa Region and Africa Great Lakes Region. They include: Burundi, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

Youth In Action is also an annual youth leaders' regional forum. Leadership skills and knowledge of the youth are enhanced through this forum, while tackling pertinent matters on peacebuilding, conflict transformation and FoRB.

The network was established by Arigatou International — Nairobi in partnership with Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) to empower young people to lead peace and promote justice, inclusion, and social cohesion in their communities. Since its inception in 2016, the network has had 5 annual regional forums.



"We are inspired to build resilience and turn our world into one that is more equal"

Ahmednoor Haji,
Kenya



CONCLUSION

Through Youth In Action, we have undoubtedly understood the youth as key players in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. We are convinced that introducing this new cohort to FoRB is very important as they work within communities with people from diverse religious backgrounds. This knowledge will go a long way to help the youths in being more aware of the challenges affecting minority groups and also identify solutions to building more equitable societies.

Youth In Action





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