



Interreligious Action for Peace

STUDIES IN MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN COOPERATION

Edited by Tom Bamat, Nell Bolton, Myla Leguro, and Atalia Omer



This publication had its origins in an October 2015 workshop in which CRS project teams and expert advisors gathered to reflect together on common elements, lessons learned, and future directions for interreligious action and social cohesion. We are grateful, therefore, not only to the authors of the case studies and essays in this book, but to all those who contributed to the process, from the initial discussions through many rounds of editing. Special thanks go to Dr. Rashied Omar for his emphasis on the prophetic dimensions of faith and to Fr. Bill Headley for his overview of global religious and interreligious dynamics. We also thank associates at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame for helping to connect our work to broader scholarship in this field, and numerous CRS colleagues: Alice Kiarie and the CRS/Kenya team for logistical support; Bob Groelsema, Aaron Chassy, and many others for their reflections and insights; and Kaitlyn Mortimer, Jen Wenger and Rebeka Martensen for helping to bring this publication to fruition.

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Cover Photo: Through the CRS peacebuilding program TA'ALA, religious leaders Father Rueis, left, and Sheikh Moustafa work together to engage the faithful in interreligious dialogue in the village of Al Odayssat in Upper Egypt. *Photo by Nikki Gamer/CRS*

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Foreword

J. ANDREAS HIPPLE, GHR FOUNDATION

In development and humanitarian action, it is now widely accepted—including among many avowedly secular professionals and institutions—that religious actors are not only important influencers on a wide range of issues but that they can also be strategic partners. Major government donors, private funders and implementing agencies have “discovered religion” with enthusiasm, due to the possibilities that new partnerships present in terms of addressing social ills tied to poverty, disease and conflict. Central to much of this new energy is a desire to strengthen interreligious relations locally and globally to promote social cohesion and peace.

That religion matters is not news to Catholic Relief Services (CRS), whose track record of working with religious actors from many traditions dates back to its founding during World War II. In countries as diverse as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Egypt, Kenya and the Philippines, CRS has forged strong and effective partnerships with priests, imams, rabbis, monks, traditional leaders and women religious that represent the traditions and diversity of the many communities the agency serves. Reflecting a deep institutional commitment to capacity building, support for local partners and continuous learning, this work presents a wide range of opportunities to analyze interreligious collaboration through both a scholarly and a practical lens, as reflected in this collection of case studies and essays.

The current attention being paid to interreligious action—including the crucial question of intrareligious collaboration, which is often as challenging as the interreligious work—builds on decades of academic and practical research from multiple fields. In the 1950s, pioneering social psychology research by Muzafer Sherif demonstrated the potential for superordinate goals (goals that can be achieved only when conflicting groups work together) to serve as the basis for reconciliation between deeply divided groups.¹ This has direct relevance for those making the case for interreligious action. More recently,

1 Muzafer Sherif, “Superordinate Groups in the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict,” *American Journal of Sociology* 63 no. 4, January (1958): 349–50.

neuroscientists have jumped into the game; for example, MIT's Emile Bruneau has demonstrated that brain scans (neuroimaging) show great promise for identifying bias toward the "other," and for measuring the effectiveness of interventions that seek to reduce bias.²

The present volume is thus both timely and essential. Donors and implementers as well as many religious actors are actively looking for ways to improve the impact of their work, build effective partnerships, strengthen interreligious peace and understanding, and to do it all in a more evidence-based manner. This trend is increasingly being reflected and analyzed in academic circles, as reflected in the proliferation of workshops and webinars, and the growing attention given in academic journals and professional publications.

FROM INTEREST TO ACTION

This drumbeat for religious engagement appears to be reaching a crescendo with new initiatives such as the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), a donor-driven effort "to harness the positive impact of religion in sustainable development," launched with German and U.S. government backing in 2016. Donors are motivated by the realization that religious actors are key influencers in societies around the world, and therefore can be unique allies in development efforts, particularly those that seek to bring about large-scale behavior change that can produce healthier and more prosperous societies.

This ties closely to an additional factor that is accelerating interest in development partnerships with religious actors: the trend toward localization of aid. When donors are serious about supporting locally led development processes, they need effective local partner institutions with the capacity to lead change processes and deliver quality programs with strong community support and engagement. Religious actors are frequently among the best-placed, highest-skilled and most influential local partners.

Reinforcing the trend is the donor community's search for better ways to strengthen social cohesion and improve relations across religious lines for the sake of the peace and security, without which progress on other social issues is impossible. Given that many of the most spectacular and explosive events that divide societies around the world—from Nigeria to Indonesia, and Minneapolis to Mogadishu—are imbued with religious overtones and often use religious language to mobilize support and action, it is strategic and necessary to engage with religious actors in crafting solutions to society's toughest challenges.

2 Emile Bruneau, "Putting Neuroscience to Work for Peace," in *The Social Psychology of Intractable Conflicts*, ed. Eran Halperin and Keran Sharvit, Peace Psychology Book Series 27 (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 143-155.

The expression of this trend is that a growing number of donors have invested significant resources in supporting interreligious collaboration on development issues. USAID has funded interreligious partnerships for many years, but the institutional consensus in favor of this work is greater than ever before. USAID's engagement in this space appears to be increasingly strategic and institutionalized across a variety of agency initiatives and program areas, supported by USAID's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and other champions across the agency. For example, USAID and GHR Foundation sponsored a pan-African conference in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2016, focused on creating new and better interreligious partnerships for peace and prosperity, bringing religious actors from 30 countries to discuss and create new partnerships.

Of course, not all interreligious partnerships require donor assistance, and in some cases it can be unhelpful. Association with foreign or local governments may cause problems instead of advancing the work; therefore, external actors need to be sensitive to the risks that their support may entail. Goals and principles may overlap to allow for close collaboration in some cases, but in other instances they do not. Religious leaders may consciously decide to keep a distance from certain government actors and initiatives for practical or ethical reasons. Also, in some cases interreligious action can be more effective precisely because it does not work through such partnerships. When the motivation for reaching out to the "other" in the spirit of partnership emerges from a religious community's own faith and understanding of its role in society—rather than as a response to elite-driven incentives—the community's commitment to interreligious action will likely be deeper and more robust.

At GHR Foundation, a private foundation headquartered in Minneapolis, we have for decades partnered with Catholic Relief Services to support the engagement of religious actors in development, both with and without government support. Drawing on a long history of effective peace and justice programs, along with a deep institutional commitment—shared by its staff at headquarters and around the world—to support locally led development, CRS has proven to be a creative and forward-thinking leader among development agencies working to develop effective interreligious programs that produce sustainable social change while building stronger social cohesion through partnership across faiths. As donor interest rises, those at the frontlines of the development, peacebuilding and humanitarian fields must continue to innovate and test new approaches to interreligious programming.

INNOVATION AND EFFECTIVE INTERRELIGIOUS PROGRAMMING

CRS is a central player in some of the most innovative interreligious programming around the world, as this volume demonstrates. GHR Foundation has since 2009 supported a collaboration on the coast of Kenya between

CRS, the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics and the Catholic Diocese of Malindi, working together to eliminate child marriage, keep girls in school and strengthen household income. The Dialogue and Action project is achieving measurable results while building bonds of trust between Christian, Muslim and traditional leaders and communities.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), USAID and GHR Foundation, with support from the Peace and Security Funders Group, co-created and launched the CAR Peacebuilding Partnership in 2015, a public-private partnership (PPP) that supports a CRS-led consortium of international and local partners through the CAR Interfaith Peacebuilding Partnership (CIPP) project. CRS, together with its partners World Vision, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Aegis Trust and Palo Alto University, is building the capacity of the Bangui-based CAR Inter-Religious Platform to establish itself as one of the country's key civil society actors working toward peace and prosperity, strengthening livelihoods, supporting trauma healing and advancing peace education. The PPP approach made it possible to deliver a much-needed, five-year commitment in a fragile state that rarely sees donor commitments beyond one year. This project shows promise in demonstrating how an interreligious approach is permitting a longer time horizon for planning and programs, thanks to the strong long-term presence of the religious communities and leaders in CAR.

As interest in interreligious action grows with donors, NGO leaders and religious actors, it is important to recall that the skill sets needed to do this work effectively and sensitively need to be supported and developed; they are not universal. Through the Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action (CIRCA) project, a multi-country grant to enhance the capacity of CRS and its local partners' ability to form effective interreligious partnerships and programs, GHR has invested in CRS's effort to become a leader in interreligious development and peacebuilding, with new training tools, evaluation frameworks and case studies based on local "connector" projects. As this volume shows, these and other CRS programs are yielding rich lessons that deserve wide attention among those interested in the religion and development nexus.

Much remains to be learned, and effective practices continue to need identification. New tools are being developed to support interreligious collaboration and the engagement of religious actors as partners in development, both with and without government support. CRS and other international agencies known for their peacebuilding work, including Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground, are active contributors of knowledge to a GHR-funded program called Effective Inter-Religious Action in Peacebuilding (EIAP), through which the Alliance for Peacebuilding is developing and disseminating tools for evaluating interreligious actions across the peacebuilding field. The field is poised to see an explosion of new research, tools, case studies and promising practices.

THE NEXT PHASE OF INTERRELIGIOUS ACTION

Where does this trend go next? The essays in this publication point toward hopeful—and challenging— new opportunities to see interreligious action spread across new geographies, diverse demographic challenges and opportunities, and thematic programming areas. The best examples of this work are deeply grounded in local contexts, as opposed to being instigated by external actors. The signs that new initiatives are emerging from places that are not generally considered as donor countries suggest that the importance of interreligious action is increasingly being recognized and driven by local actors in diverse contexts. The Republic of Benin launched an ambitious interreligious initiative at a meeting in Cotonou in May 2015.³ U.S. State Department officials within the Secretary of State's new Religion and Global Affairs office credit religious leaders who participated in this meeting with calling for the U.S. government to support anti-corruption training for Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria. The first round took place in Lagos in January 2016, followed by a training in Kano in October 2016.

Other examples of locally driven interreligious action include significant youth and women leadership efforts, traditionally among the weakest elements of interreligious programs and events. The U.S. Institute of Peace is among the key international organizations identifying and supporting these youth and women leaders, through programs such as its Generation Change initiative, which brought youth leaders from 13 countries to visit the Dalai Lama at his home in exile in Dharamsala, India in May 2016, for a workshop on spirituality and peacebuilding.⁴

Ultimately, the proof that interreligious action is poised for continued growth—even in an era of growing uncertainty and pushback against open, globally engaged societies that can reap the benefits of religious and ethnic pluralism—lies in the engagement of religious actors themselves in efforts to advance interreligious action. This is happening in a wide variety of traditions. The Japanese Buddhist society Rishsho Kosei-kai provides significant support for interreligious action around the world through its partnership with the Religions for Peace network. Pope Francis's calls for Catholics to embrace the “other” are a regular feature of his public statements and appearances. American Muslim leaders are responding to fear and prejudice with engagement and community service, and examples abound across other faiths. Strong advocates for interreligious partnerships are found in the rich traditions of Judaism, Evangelical Protestantism and Hinduism, and even among agnostics

3 Claire Lesegretain, *Le Bénin encourage le dialogue interreligieux contre Boko Haram*, *La Croix*, May 26, 2015, <http://www.la-croix.com/Urbi-et-Orbi/Actualite/Monde/Le-Benin-encourage-le-dialogue-interreligieux-contre-Boko-Haram-2015-05-26-1316171>.

4 U.S. Institute of Peace, “Dalai Lama Offers Hope to Youth Leaders—and Vice Versa,” *The Olive Branch* (blog), 2016, <http://www.usip.org/olivebranch/2016/05/05/dalai-lama-offers-hope-youth-leaders-and-vice-versa>.

and atheists who value and respect the importance of faith, which provides guidance to so many people across the world.

At GHR Foundation, we have sought to help this effort along through the work of our Inter-Religious Action initiative, which seeks to help bring interreligious action into the mainstream of the development, peacebuilding and humanitarian fields, with the funding and support it deserves. As interest in interreligious action grows, GHR seeks to support robust evaluation and learning frameworks that can help identify effective practices, improve knowledge sharing, spur strategic thinking and raise the profile of successful initiatives. Through this effort, we hope to inspire other donors to increase their investments in interreligious action and consider supporting effective and authentic partnerships with faith communities to pursue shared objectives in peace and development.

As the impact of interreligious action advances, and the rigor with which it is pursued and assessed grows, it remains essential to capture and share the lessons of success and failure that can inform new actors, inspire new participants, attract new supporters and improve current practices. This collection could hardly have come at a more opportune time. Policymakers and donors are looking for new ways to partner with religious actors; religious actors are seeking to help their communities and live out their faith in public service; and development programmers are exploring new authentic and high-impact partnerships. The authors of these chapters have generously shared their expertise grounded in community, theory and practice—a powerful mix that has much to teach us all.

An Introduction

TOM BAMAT, NELL BOLTON AND MYLA LEGURO

The engagement of Catholic Relief Services in interreligious dialogue and action spans over two decades, starting in the southern Philippines and expanding across a diverse array of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans and Southeast Asia. CRS' work with partners and peers includes initiatives with key religious leaders and with a multitude of believers at the grassroots level. The consistent primary focus has been on building people-to-people relationships and intergroup cohesion for the common good, rather than on "countering violence." While our programming has always aimed at fostering peaceful coexistence and cooperation, particularly at the level of local communities, increasingly its scope is being extended to integrate small advances in human development and promote good governance. The nature of the work and its positive results have earned CRS due recognition as a leader in the field of interfaith practice. Just one example is the significant number of CRS staff invited to Alliance for Peacebuilding consultations aiming to more rigorously evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of interreligious action for peace.

CRS is committed to robust cross-learning within and among its own country programs. A self-funded and innovative project begun in 2016, Advancing Interreligious Peacebuilding, seeks to achieve precisely this goal. The organization is also committed to broad dissemination of lessons learned and promising practices in the interreligious field. This very publication, meant for peers and university colleagues as well as its own staff, testifies to this wide learning objective. We hope that it will contribute to greater interest in interreligious action, help promote improved processes and enable significant results from such work.

All six case studies on interreligious action included in this volume, and the impressive academic overview woven above and through them by Professor Atalia Omer, center on *Muslim-Christian dynamics*. This is hardly a coincidence. Muslims and Christians live side by side in the vast majority of countries across the globe, and their adherents together constitute over

half of humanity.⁵ Their history of interactions over fourteen centuries has been marked by turbulence but also by places and periods of remarkable mutual thriving. Today, with grave concerns about perceived injustices, religious freedom, mutual intolerance, negative perceptions of the other, and horrifying acts by violent extremists, we are urgently challenged to increase interreligious understanding and to deepen ties of solidarity and cooperation.

Despite contemporary tensions—and beyond the evident theological and doctrinal differences, not to mention the manipulative mobilization and violence perpetrated by small minorities—Muslims and Christians have much in common. Significant shared core values on social justice and peace are found in the scriptures and teaching traditions of both. There are common exhortations to compassion and forgiveness. There is a myriad of living examples of mutual respect and good will, from the diverse expressions of grassroots dialogue and cooperation exemplified in these case studies to elite initiatives, such as the open message “A Common Word Between Us and You”, signed by hundreds of Muslim leaders and welcomed by many Christian counterparts.⁶

As the late Dutch scholar Jacques Waardenburg noted twenty years ago, when Huntington’s facile “clash of civilizations” hypothesis was new, it is never Islam and Christianity as such that develop negative or positive relationships, but “particular interpretations and forms of Islam and of Christianity, found in specific Muslim and Christian groups, which in particular situations condition certain types of relationships”.⁷ Practical local issues and specific political and social interests play a crucial role in positive and negative dynamics, even as globalization reduces some of the traditional space between milieux. Overcoming a superficial understanding of Muslim-Christian dynamics depends on probing concrete contextual sources of conflict and the often-unexplored patterns of coexistence and effective springboards for interreligious cooperation. The latter figure prominently in the CRS case studies that follow.

The case studies in this booklet highlight specific approaches and tools that CRS colleagues created, and the networks they helped forge. They address shortcomings as well as successes and delineate lessons garnered from everyday experience. They also point to the many challenges on the horizon, such as finding ways to better employ religious resources in the pursuit of peace; linking community-level attitudinal and behavioral changes to broader social and religious transformation; effectively addressing personal traumas and prejudices; and fostering women’s and young people’s leadership in and through their religious communities.

5 Pew Research Center, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections 2010-2050,” 2015.

6 The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, “A Common Word Between Us and You,” <http://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/>.

7 Waardenburg Jacques, “Critical Issues in Muslim-Christian Relations: Theoretical, Practical, Dialogical, Scholarly,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8, no. 1 (1997): 15.

Our sincere gratitude to the CRS colleagues who produced these stimulating and informative case studies, and to Andreas Hipple of GHR Foundation and Atalia Omer of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, who added such valuable contributions to framing and making broader public sense of the contributions.

Interreligious Action as a Driver for Social Cohesion and Development

ATALIA OMER

INTRODUCTION

An examination of the case studies featured in this book of mostly Muslim-Christian interreligious action (IRA) in diverse contexts sheds light on the ways in which religion and the practice of peacebuilding can challenge and expand scholarship in the subfield of religion, conflict and peacebuilding (RCP). All of the cases surveyed in this volume—from Mindanao’s land disputes and Kenya’s gender-based violence and child marriages to Egypt’s Muslim-Christian tensions and Bosnia-Herzegovina’s enduring postwar challenges—spotlight the intersections between development objectives (broadly construed) and intercommunal peacebuilding mechanisms and processes. These intersections point to the value of mainstreaming religion and religious actors in promoting social cohesion, in itself a recent focus that is highly embedded within a normative upholding of the values of pluralism and sociopolitical inclusion. This mainstreaming involves the recognition that religious actors, networks, institutions, resources and patterns of innovation play complex and historically contextualized roles in entrenching violence and patterns of dehumanizing and exclusionary identity constructs as well as offering pathways for multipronged and multisectoral transformative processes and reduction of different varieties of violence—from discriminatory practices (structural and cultural violence) to deadly violence. The shift to *action* cultivating the common good, therefore, signals a focus on promoting social justice. The “common good,” which IRA supports through various “connector” projects, such as building a well or developing a collaborative health initiative, constitutes a secular space, indispensable in deeply pluralistic contexts. Directing the foci of religious peacebuilding to secular spaces by underscoring *action* does not diminish the pertinence of religious meanings, but rather emphasizes the foregrounding of the demands of pluralism and nonviolent methods of conflict transformation.

In this essay, I first address the ways in which the turn to interreligious action inverts the logic of intrareligious radicalization by tackling the very conditions that provide fertile ground for such radicalization. Second, I analyze the accompaniment paradigm of the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) approach, which through local partnerships facilitates binding, bonding and bridging activities (called the 3Bs) and multisectoral projects, involving but not limited to IRA. The case studies featured in this publication convey a mainstreaming of religion in designing peacebuilding change processes and promoting the development agenda. Third, I address the instrumental focus on religious actors as peacebuilding agents. Fourth, I analyze how an emphasis on action for the “common good” and the promotion of social cohesion deepens the synergies and intersections of IRA with development objectives such as gender equality. Finally, rather than viewing it as an alternative paradigm to interfaith dialogue (processes and practices that likewise necessitate intra-tradition examination and exchanges), I examine IRA as a mechanism for social change that enhances the capacity of the dialogue paradigm to promote peacebuilding and justice. The IRA paradigm helps to refocus the function of dialogue from interpersonal or symbolic levels of engagement toward systemic and cultural-relational patterns. Rather than limiting the scope of “religion” in peacebuilding, IRA expands it by shifting the preoccupation from deadly violence toward sociocultural and structural concerns, opening up synergies with development foci on education, legal reform, food insecurity and women’s empowerment).

BEYOND A REDUCTIVE OUTLOOK: WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN CVE AND IRA?

Analyzing the role of religion in violence and conflict is relevant for framing IRA and change processes in other contexts. Much attention is devoted to CVE (combating religious extremism) or PVE (preventing violent extremism), due to the growth and spread especially of violent Islamist organizations and forces such as Da’esh (ISIS/IL)⁸ or Boko Haram. Unfortunately, despite much research and history suggesting that Muslim contexts are not idiosyncratic in this respect,⁹ the “religious” in the construct “religious extremism” is conventionally coded as “Islamic,” which betrays an enduring Orientalism.¹⁰ An entire industry of experts clings to “culturalist” explanations that analyze the rise of Islamism, reductively downplaying and glossing over contextual variables such as foreign

8 I refer to the movement by its self-assigned name rather than the anglicized acronyms, following the practice with Boko Haram, Hamas and other Islamist movements.

9 For an overview of violence motifs in religious traditions, consult Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and for an example of a study examining violent ideological instrumentalization of religion, see Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998 [1996]). See also Gabriel A. Almoond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

10 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994 [1978]); Hamid Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism Knowledge & Power in a Time of Terror* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2015); Elizabeth Shakman-Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012).

invasion, bombing, food insecurity and the breakdown of governance. Even if this reductionism has itself been dynamic—from an initial social scientific and humanistic cognitive emphasis in the 1980s on Islamism as doctrine or on Islamism’s sociological roots¹¹ to a focus on political processes and organizational forms and patterns in the 1990s and early 2000s¹²—broader and global geopolitical agendas and interventions were precluded from the analysis of radicalization along seemingly religious lines. Such contextual explanations, in other words, would have challenged reductive attribution of violence to religion or the equally reductive theorizing of religion as merely epiphenomenal. Since 2011, however, traditional sociological and political modes of analysis needed to be reframed in light of the “ISISification of Islamist politics,”¹³ which focuses more on cognitive appeals and motivations articulated in terms of theological or religious imperatives. When related radicalization along religious lines is examined domestically (within Western contexts), often through the lens of “national security,” other variables such as social and economic exclusion and cultural violence emerge.¹⁴ However, connecting the dots between religious extremism abroad and radicalization “at home” often, at the level of policy and popular discourse, reflects an easy reliance on culturalist reductionism. Such reductionism presumes an essential incompatibility of Islam with Western norms and fuels the rise of chauvinistic forces, such as the illiberalism and exclusionary political platforms gaining ground across Europe and the U.S. in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Another line of analysis employs conceptions of “authentic” religion as good and peace-promoting, rendering any manifestation of apparent religious motivations for violence as a perversion of religion. Accordingly, if violence appears with a religious front, this religiosity is seen as an inauthentic façade and a perversion of the religious tradition. Graeme Wood’s widely read article, “What ISIS Really Wants,”¹⁵ attempts to challenge the argument about the inauthenticity of Da’esh’s Islamic claims and practices (such as beheading)¹⁶ as not only misguided, but also myopic and detrimental for American strategy because such an argument brackets the need to gain a full understanding of

11 For instance, Giles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet & Pharaoh*, trans. Jon Rothschild (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

12 See Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) and his *Street Politics: Poor People’s Movements in Iran* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1997).

13 See Nathan J. Brown, “Facing the Cruel Palindrome: Moving beyond *Sauve Qui Peut*,” memo prepared for “Evolving Methodologies in the Study of Islamist Politics” workshop, *Washington D.C., January 29, 2016*, 10–12, 10.

14 For instance, Emmanuel Karagiannis, “European Converts to Islam: Mechanisms of Radicalization,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 13, no. 1 (2012): 99–113; Katherine E. Brown and Tania Saeed, “Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization at British Universities: Muslim Encounters and Alternatives,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 11 (2015): 1952–1968; Jocelyne Cesari, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

15 Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

16 See Laurie Goodstein, “Muslim Leaders Wage Theological Battle, Stoking ISIS’ Anger,” *The New York Times*, May 8, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/09/us/isis-threatens-muslim-preachers-who-are-waging-theological-battle-online.html>; and “Letter to Dr. Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri, Alias ‘Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi’, and to the Fighters and Followers of the Self-Declared ‘Islamic State’,” signed by numerous Islamic scholars around the world, September 24, 2014, <http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/>.

Da'esh's "very Islamic," as Woods puts it, theology. While it is crucial to take Da'esh's or any other movement's religious claims seriously, an overemphasis on "religion" flirts with reductive explanatory frames that offer very few conceptual tools for historicizing the emergence of religious radicalism or for imagining change processes to reduce the conditions for violent radicalization (including rethinking the effectiveness—if not the morality—of U.S. drone attacks and other policy decisions). Critics of Wood's article were correct to locate it within a longer Orientalist tradition, which relies on culturalist or civilizational explanatory modes when highlighting the relevance of religion to conflict. They were similarly quick to point out that rendering Da'esh "very Islamic" prioritizes certain interpretations of seventh-century Islam over the voices of contemporary Muslims who challenge Da'esh's retrieval of the sources of Islam and Muslim histories.¹⁷

By highlighting religion as a cause of violence, Wood's "What ISIS Really Wants" has impacted "counter-terrorism" or CVE circles in a way similar to the influence Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations,"¹⁸ had on policymaking circles in the post-Cold War era. Both are reductive. Positing "real" religion as a source of peacebuilding in a simplistic fashion is likewise reductive.¹⁹ This epistemological bias (which advances certain assumptions about authenticity while rejecting other statements that suggest that authentic religion/Islam is peace-seeking and merciful) is reflective of an enduring Orientalism, since no analogous assumptions are made concerning Christian history. The same commentators who attribute causality to Islam do not define Christianity comparatively by its bloody history of the Crusades. When Da'esh is explained, as it is by Wood, as "very Islamic," the explanation precludes not only contextual variables, such as geopolitical forces, and mundane "secular" factors, such as "underdevelopment" and "insecurity," but also the possibility of change processes that could include deeply Muslim resources and mechanisms. Ironically, dismissing as delusional the "this is not authentic Islam" camp by underscoring how Islamic Da'esh works against a nonreductive approach to conflict transformation, which is at the heart of IRA.

Reimagining CVE and PVE is relevant for a clearer understanding of how interreligious peacebuilding action could occur and contribute to broader development and social cohesion agendas. The fact that religion and religious engagement have gained traction in diplomatic and policy circles shares a genesis story with the launch of the subfield of religion and peacebuilding. This (by now all-too-familiar) story includes the 1995 publication of *Religion:*

17 For instance, Robert Wright, "The Clash of Civilizations that Isn't," *The New Yorker*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/clash-civilizations-isnt>; and Ross Douthat, "In Defense of Islam," *The New York Times*, February 18, 2015, <http://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/18/in-defense-of-islam/?mwrsm=Email&r=1>.

18 Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993 Issue, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/48950/samuel-p-huntington/the-clash-of-civilizations>.

19 See also Atalia Omer, "Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding: Synthetic Remarks," in Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 659–682.

the *Missing Dimension of Statecraft* by Doug Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, the *Ambivalence of the Sacred* by R. Scott Appleby in 2000, and a vast array of works focused on the practice of interfaith dialogue and various multitrack, nonofficial religious peacebuilding activities (see below).²⁰ The “discovery” of religion culminated in the Chicago Council on Global Affairs’ 2010 report, *Engaging Religious Communities Abroad*,²¹ and the establishment of the new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives (2013) within the U.S. State Department and other comparable offices in countries across Europe. The cumulative effect of scholarship and diplomatic and peacebuilding practices involving religion and religious actors is to challenge secularist myopia and norms in articulating foreign policies and development agendas. Such efforts find antecedents with the 2002 effort of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to integrate a focus on faith-based actors, mostly driven by an instrumentalist view of religious actors and institutions as effective and necessary agents of development objectives.²² In a similar vein, as noted by Peter Mandaville and Sara Silvestri, the European Commission created an office dedicated to “Dialogue with churches, religious associations or communities and philosophical and nonconfessional organizations,” and the U.K. Department for International Development likewise established its “Faith Partnership Principles” in 2012.²³

Challenging secularist norms means recognizing not only the instrumental value of religious actors and networks for implementing development agendas but also their contribution to gaining deeper understandings of complex human and sociopolitical topographies—all necessary for articulating better foreign policy. Mandaville and Silvestri stress the institutional, legal and training obstacles for mainstreaming religion. They point out that ad hoc voluntary training of Foreign Service officers in the U.S. and U.K. does not quite challenge the secularist confinement of religion in international relations to questions concerning international religious freedom and interfaith engagement. It prevents a more nuanced analysis of how religion intersects with social, political and economic dynamics.²⁴ A mainstreaming approach to religion in foreign policy, accordingly, “would recognize the central importance of religion as

20 See R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, *Religion: The Missing Dimension of State-Craft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding,” *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 6 (2001): 685-704; Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam: Theory and Practice* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003); and Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

21 See R. Scott Appleby and Richard Cizik, “Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for US Foreign Policy,” *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, February 23, 2010, <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/engaging-religious-communities-abroad-new-imperative-us-foreign-policy>.

22 See Katherine Marshall, “Engaging Faith Leaders in Senegal to Promote Women’s and Family Health,” *The World Faiths Development Dialogue*, April 2015, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/berkeley-center/150427WFDDEngagingFaithLeadersSenegalPromoteWomensFamilyHealth.pdf>.

23 Peter Mandaville and Sara Silvestri, “Integrating Religious Engagement into Diplomacy: Challenges & Opportunities,” *Issues in Governance Studies at Brookings* 67 (2015): 2.

24 Ibid., 7.

a societal force around the world, and the major role that religious actors and organizations play in a wide range of issues in the daily lives of global populations.”²⁵ This mainstreaming approach resonates strongly with the IRA cases featured in this volume, where “religion” is not bracketed but is instead integrated into a broader landscape of actors and concerns.

MAINSTREAMING RELIGION

Myla Leguro describes land disputes among Muslims, Christians and indigenous groups as a key driver of conflict and violence in Mindanao. A history of Christian settler colonialism and systematic land grabs stoked the Moro Muslim insurgency against the Philippine government. The case of Mindanao illuminates the dangers of reductive, culturalist explanatory frameworks that fail to capture the relevance of a deep historical analysis of, in this case, colonial exploitation and how Christians were associated with it. Colonialization comes in a variety of forms, and one such form is its legal and bureaucratic logic. The colonial infrastructure’s legacy of privileging Christian settlers and commercial agendas over and against Muslim and other indigenous communities endures in contemporary land disputes, which are at the epicenter of the broader conflict in Mindanao. Leguro correctly reads such disputes as the loci of “collision” between modern property law and traditional conceptions of land ownership. Escalating land disputes, she adds, deepen fear and prejudice among communities and contribute to social disintegration and violence. Therefore, land and property rights are not merely “legal” issues, but also communal issues loaded with sociocultural meanings and drawn along ethnoreligious lines. Thus, religious-ethnic constructive engagements constitute the necessary (though not sufficient) mechanisms for building inclusive societal relations and reducing violence. Leguro and colleagues developed the A3B program, which exemplifies an innovative approach to mainstreaming religion in change processes.

The A3B project (implemented from 2012 to 2015) follows the three-step approach for reconciliation through applying Binding, Bonding and Bridging activities. It was designed, as Leguro explains, to cultivate alternatives to violence on (intra- and inter-) personal, communal and municipal levels. Binding activities focus on self-transformation, including trauma healing and dialogue. Bonding activities focus on strengthening intragroup relations, operating under the theory that improved intragroup relational patterns will benefit intergroup action and dialogue, and cultivate a capacity to negotiate land disputes. Within this space, traditional and religious leaders (TRLs) are trained to act as peace facilitators. Bonding activities also involve TRLs leadership in group celebrations and land conflict mapping and analysis. Bridging activities, eventually, cultivate intergroup trust and activities, such as interfaith celebrations, community-based reconciliation projects, joint legal

²⁵ Ibid., 10.

literacy trainings and intergroup dialogue. The desired outcome of A3B is a set of mutually agreed upon, pragmatic and implementable resolutions that can generate support from stakeholders at the municipal and governmental levels.

The description in this book of the many accomplishments of the A3B project in Central Mindanao highlights the intricate ways in which religion and religious actors could participate in binding, bonding and bridging. These activities contend with and innovate within the otherwise colluding forces of judicial mechanisms and their underpinning logic (with their colonial baggage) and the experiences of communal disruption and divisions along ethnoreligious fault lines. Because traditional modalities of authority and registers were deeply disrupted in the colonial era, the A3B project focused on training and mobilizing local TRLs and LTs (“Lupong Tagapamayapa” or “village pacification committees”) as agents of peacebuilding and land dispute mediation. Religious actors, therefore, feature prominently as pivotal agents in conflict transformation from below, bearing synergistic relations with policy and governmental decision-making levels. However, their centrality does not bear so much on theological and hermeneutical work, but rather on bolstering their traction within their communities and intercommunally as well as enhancing their conflict resolution skills through cross-sectoral collaborations. Inter-identity or bridging activities (including the formation of interfaith networks) among Christians, Muslims and other indigenous people focus on mediating land disputes. Bridging activities on the religious-cultural level cultivate enabling conditions for mitigating “secular” conflicts such as land disputes. This category of “secular” conflict is not the binary of “religious” conflict but rather, in the case of Mindanao, foregrounds the enduring tensions between modern legal constructs of property rights, the histories of targeted colonial displacement, and the long-term deepening of postcolonial, intergroup hostilities, stereotyping and othering. Hence, “religious” and “cultural” meanings are persistently relevant to redressing “secular” and “embodied” concerns and grievances. An IRA framework clarifies how mainstreaming religion would challenge the debunked old binary relations between the religious and the secular, and would cultivate the conditions for promoting social cohesion and the development agenda. The focus on religious or traditional leadership remains a common thread for IRA, suggesting that mainstreaming religion would require, to a certain degree, maintaining an instrumental outlook toward religious actors.

ENHANCING RELIGIOUS LEADERS’ CAPACITY AS PEACEBUILDING AGENTS

Distinct from the apparent secularity of land conflicts in Mindanao, Bosnia-Herzegovina’s (BiH) deep ethnic divisions overlap with religious identities (Christian Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosniaks), thus putting forward an appearance of religion as the driver of conflict. Yet, in both cases (and in the others surveyed in this volume), religion intersects in complex and dynamic ways with the history of violence, the construction of rigid and

exclusionary identity boundaries, and the potential roles of religious actors in conflict transformation. Choosing Peace Together (CPT) was a CRS-run program in BiH (from 2010 to 2014), in partnership with Caritas of the Bishops' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which demonstrated the constructive role of interreligious action in responding to enduring, deep ethnoreligious divisions in postwar contexts of trauma and in working on substantial reconciliation two decades after the war. The mono-cultural/ethnic/religious nation is an outcome of the modern history of nation-making²⁶ and needs to be seen as such, despite claims for primordial authenticity. Of course, inclusive societal norms and human rights are likewise modern drivers of grievances and visions of reconciliation and refiguring of national discourses. The modernity of the war in BiH and the modernity of the ethnoreligious claims in Mindanao counter potential narratives that suggest ancient hatreds and inevitable separationist impulses. The BiH case, therefore, demonstrates the long-term impact of segregationist education policies and not paying adequate attention to intergenerational trauma healing. CPT, as an IRA frame, shows why postwar reconciliation demands more expansive work on transforming group narratives through media and education reforms, directing its attention to youth and to the threefold process of binding, bonding and bridging.

In postwar BiH, ethnic divisions still loom large, and young people are a particularly important demographic for the 3Bs method. In intergenerational terms, and due to strict ethnic segregation in schools, children who were born after the war's conclusion are exposed to routine dehumanization of other communities by parents, educators and the media, while harboring no memories of intercommunal interactions and peaceful cohabitation themselves. In response, CPT focuses on youth, intergenerational dynamics and transmission mechanisms of intergroup hostility and stereotyping.

Intergenerational differences are not idiosyncratic to BiH. For example, the assessment of the Tolerant Attitudes and Leadership for Action (TA'ALA) program (implemented between 2013 and 2015 in twenty villages in the three Upper Egyptian governorates of Assiut, Sohag, and Luxor, in partnership with the local Coptic Catholic Diocese and a variety of Muslim-led organizations) determined that more attention needed to be directed to how women pass on belligerent attitudes toward other communities to their children. This gender angle illumines the complex ways in which negative attitudes are transmitted intergenerationally and, likewise, suggests important intersections with religious literacy, education and women's empowerment. Identifying mothers as agents of violence stresses the need to expand the potential effectiveness of de-centered conceptions of leadership and influence. Likewise, in the case of BiH, the focus on young people was explained because, as Nell

26 For central works that unpack the modernity of nationalism, see Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]).

Bolton and Edita Čolo Zahirović highlight, they tend to resist reconciliation more than their parents, fearing that reconciliation would spell acceptance of the kind of sufferings their parents endured during the war. De-centering, therefore, entails pluralizing and expanding the category of leadership to include nonofficial actors and other key demographics who participate in socialization mechanisms and thus are important for implementing platforms for increased social cohesion. The focus on leadership and key people in positions of authority is understandable in its strategic effectiveness, but it does not preclude nonofficial community leaders such as parents and youth. An expanded category of leadership can push against the enduringly male-centric boundaries of the focus on religious and other forms of authority.

Focusing on youth and other potential spoilers as loci of reconciliation, through trauma healing and “counter-messaging,” nonetheless suggests that hermeneutical work that draws upon religious-cultural and historical literacy is a necessary, if neglected, dimension of the assessment of CPT in BiH as a peacebuilding mechanism. Indeed, the case study of CPT illuminates the distinct ways in which the 3Bs approach could operate in transforming narratives, perceptions of the “other” and societal reconciliation, through inter-ethnoreligious engagement and truth telling. Like in Mindanao, where religious and indigenous leaders in the barangays were key for implementing the 3Bs, CPT too highlights the potential role of religious actors in promoting such projects for social cohesion. By “counter-messaging” I mean the ways in which reinterpretative work counters the various levels at which exclusionary narratives and “othering” unfold in the media and in school curricula. While, in Mindanao, the effectiveness of the 3Bs program is measured in terms of the capacity to mediate land conflicts, the effectiveness of the 3Bs in BiH is measured by tracking attitudinal shifts and greater recognition of the other’s authentic narratives. To reach such transformative spaces, it is necessary to engage more deeply with how stereotyping of other ethnoreligious communities can be combated through counter-messaging (including through transgressive theatre) and challenging historiographical accounts in textbooks, as CPT attempted.

The role of religion, therefore, is more interpretive than instrumental as was the case in Mindanao, where traditional religious leaders were selected based on their communal influence. For inter-ethnoreligious action to offer pathways to reconciliation and desegregation in BiH, it would require renarrating religion’s intersections with national historiographies and their reproduction in the media and popular artistic expressions. Hence, such an analysis calls for more research into how religious literacy can participate in peace media, art, youth engagement and curricula development, to support renarration and cultivation of empathy and inclusive democratic practices. It also challenges the presumption that IRA merely instrumentalizes the capacity of religious actors and institutions to participate in change processes. Often “instrumentalization” requires deep intra- and intergroup transformative processes as well as intra- and interpersonal shifts, which the case studies in this volume could foreground

rather than bracket as a way of highlighting connections with the praxis of inter- and intrareligious dialogue (more below). Religion, hence, needs to be theorized as being vast and internally plural, not only for its form and function.²⁷

However, most of the explicit framings of IRA did assume an instrumentalizing lens rather than an emphasis on interpretive, exegetical and hermeneutical resources that religious actors presumably draw upon and innovate within. The theory of change informing TA'ALA focused on Muslim and Christian leaders and their willingness to act as agents of collaborative conflict resolution and promotion of tolerance, in addition to how such collaborative action could contribute to an overall reduction of intergroup suspicion along ethnoreligious lines. As in the case of Mindanao, the emphasis on training leaders and enhancing their peacebuilding capacities through binding (self-transformational) and bonding (intragroup dialogue and reassessment) activities was built on the leaders' potential for deescalating and/or preventing violent outcomes of intergroup conflict. The selection of participants for leadership training, therefore, was determined locally by the stakeholders themselves and through an assessment of the leaders' relative respectability and perceived authority within their communities and, as Leguro explains in the A3B case, such selection also needed to take into account the actors' own embeddedness in the dynamics of conflict and own vested interests. The younger generation engaged in similar training and intergroup cultural activities. According to Fahmy, the Muslim and Christian religious and clan leaders who participated in TA'ALA established mechanisms to monitor and resolve interreligious conflict. As a result of such relationship-building, villagers in Luxor and Sohag opened their homes to participants in TA'ALA. This is a highly desirable outcome and mechanism for deepening social cohesion—one that calls attention not only to the instrumentality of religious actors as potential peacebuilding agents, but also to their engagement with their tradition and how such engagement plays out within the framework of the 3Bs.

Framing IRA as one mechanism in a broader process of societal change, promotion of cohesion, and reduction of violence opens the path, as in the cases of BiH and TA'ALA, to focus on “secular” education and other policy reforms relevant to the scope of religious peacebuilding. TA'ALA's work in Upper Egypt, similar to the BiH case, demonstrates how tensions and violence between Muslim and Christian communities are also the outcome of segregated spaces, misinformation and misperceptions reinforced through societal separation and a lack of intercommunal conflict resolution mechanisms. The examination also shows that intergroup relationship-building, compounded by

27 For examples, see Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito, eds., *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Jeffrey Haynes, ed., *Religion, Politics and International Relations: Selected Essays* (London: Routledge, 2011); Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Timothy Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Jack Snyder, ed., *Religion and International Relations Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

intragroup and personal transformative work that challenges misperceptions and demonization of the “other,” improves the quality of life of affected populations by establishing mechanisms for collaboration and deescalating disputes. The focus on youth and influential leaders once again points to the instrumental value of key religious actors, but also suggests that tangible results can only be measured in terms of either preventative action or other collaborative campaigns and projects designed to advance development goals and needs such as health and education. Religion intersects strongly with other identities. Therefore, to overcome rigid and belligerent boundaries and obstacles to nonviolent dispute resolution, or to build relationships for reconciliation or de-escalation of violence, the transmission mechanism of belligerence, stereotyping and negative rhetoric need to be addressed. It also requires identifying key actors that, often with some self-transformative work, could influence intra-communal bonding activities in order to facilitate intercommunal bridging activities—all potentially contributing to increasing social cohesion and democratic praxis. Arguably, the effectiveness and broad traction of connector projects rely upon generating recognition of common “secular” needs and goals (often measured in terms of development indices) and cultivating social capital for their sustainable implementation.

IRA, as practiced in the cases featured in this volume, moves away from the pitfalls inherent in culturalist reductive explanations, which posit religion (and religious actors) as either a cause of conflict or a source of peacebuilding, by distilling a discussion of religion as ideology or theology, and of “religious actors” as distinct types of actors always operating out of their theological outlooks, rather than stepping in and out of such roles.²⁸ Leguro underscores that in the context of Mindanao, for example, the TRLs often occupied multiple identities in their communities—some were civil society actors or former rebels, others held political positions—all factors that influenced their actions and motivations, challenging culturalist compartmentalization of religious actions and actors. In fact, the specifically “religious” aspect of their intercommunal action, as distinct from “secular” skills, objectives and modes of engagement and action, was sometimes hard to detect. In Mindanao, religious and traditional leaders were deemed instrumental due to their local authority, but their success in mediating land conflicts was also thanks to their more “secular” training and investment in social cohesion. The emphasis on *action*, therefore, offers ways to challenge both the limits of culturalist paradigms that tend to explain conflicts reductively and the inverse approach hardwired into the conventional paradigm of interfaith dialogue as a peacebuilding mechanism. Critically, the emphasis on action does not suggest the dismissal of dialogue but rather the reframing of emphasis from *talking to acting* and from religion’s contribution to reduction of acute direct

28 For a critique of this theorizing of “religious agency”, see Paul Lichterman, “Studying Public Religion: Beyond the Beliefs-Driven Actor”, in Courtney Bender, Wendy Cadge, Peggy Levitt, and David Smilde, eds., *Religion on the Edge: De-Centering and Re-Centering the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 115-136.

violence (peace promotion) to a more complex engagement, with the tasks of justice promotion functioning alongside to cohesion and development work. The pursuit of justice cannot bracket concerns about food insecurity, gender-based violence and marginalization, and water pollution, to list only a few. This turn to action, hence, represents a new avenue for mainstreaming religion. Notably, however, dialogue is itself an indispensable form of practice. It is not the binary of action but rather a different kind of action.

SYNERGIES: IRA AND DEVELOPMENT

I began with a detour into the efforts to conceptualize the mainstreaming of religion as a necessary step in overcoming blind spots (analytic and practical) generated by secularist normativity and rigid differentiation of otherwise complexly intersecting spheres of sociopolitical and cultural formations. This discursive deviation provides the resources to help us think outside the prevailing modalities in which religion is analyzed and practiced, as either a source and driver of violence or conflict, or as an agent of peacebuilding and development through interfaith dialogue, diplomacy, humanitarianism, accompaniment, and prophetic resistance and bravery of individuals. When all these capacities are evaluated synergistically by bringing them together with democracy, governance, education, food insecurity and gender equality as well as safety and human security, the connections between CVE and PVE, on the one hand, and development, peacebuilding and conflict transformation praxis, on the other, become clearer. Cultivating religious literacy to combat manipulations, deepening of inter-tradition or intergroup trust, and promoting common communal objectives, to name a few, are important spheres of activities. However, their effectiveness is significantly diminished without a policy focus on reducing poverty and insecurity, increasing gender equality and improving education.

Put simply, increasing fluency in Muslim sources to counter Da'esh's or Boko Haram's manipulations of Islam will not by itself (despite its importance) provide a causal mechanism to reduce their appeals. The attractiveness of such extremist instrumentalizations of religion is best muted through a comprehensive approach covering a variety of processes, from ceasing drone attacks to transforming structural and cultural violence underpinning Euro-American societies. People are often embedded in harmful and violent ideologies that they hold as authentic and worthy of sacrifice. Changing their mind is never as simple as presenting better ideas (though such hermeneutical contestation is crucial). For example, the Jewish settlers who routinely harass Palestinians in the Occupied Territories feel entirely justified. They legitimize their behavior by alluding to specific biblical narratives that underscore their supposed ownership of the land. However, their literal reading of the text is not at all literal, but rather the upshot of decades of complex ideological socialization and Israeli settlement and occupation policies. Therefore, counteracting the "literal" reading of biblical promises and marshalling alternative Jewish interpretations is crucial. Mainstreaming religion, as

exemplified in CRS's IRA programs, effectively de-centers such conventional theorizing of religion-qua-texts, sets of beliefs and social scripts.

This de-centering entails addressing economic, political, cultural and symbolic grievances through a strategic analytical lens.²⁹ This is an opportune time to begin identifying synergies between development objectives and peacebuilding as part of the effort to de-silo development and peacebuilding theory and practice—strongly recognized in the framing of the new 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³⁰ Goal 16, in particular, pertains to the synergetic potential of CRS's focus on interreligious action and various other forms of partnership in diverse conflict zones. Goal 16, "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions," highlights the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and the cultivation of accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.³¹ Among others, the targets of Goal 16 include reducing all forms of violence; ending the abuse, exploitation of, and violence against children; reducing illicit flows of finances and arms; promoting the rule of law in national and international arenas; and strengthening governance while eliminating corruption. IRA has moved into this domain of development by mainstreaming religion and by designing multisectoral programs to directly promote social cohesion.

The 17 Goals include eliminating poverty and food insecurity as well as promoting health, well-being, clean water, affordable energy, sustainable economic growth, quality education for all, and respect for planetary limits and climate action. The SDGs also include strong language about gender equality and the reduction of inequalities more broadly, presenting gender as a potential conflict zone between secular and religious agendas and divergent normative conceptions of the family and human rights. Indeed, the focus of IRA on religious leadership entails, in most instances, a deficiency in terms of combating gender inequality, patriarchal structures and heteronormativity. The case study of the Dialogue and Action Project (DAP) in coastal Kenya (implemented from 2013 to 2016) reveals that key religious leaders can facilitate culturally sensitive interventions, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to resist and prevent the exploitation of children (especially girls). The prevalence of child marriage in this region is highly correlated with poverty and the deprivation of education opportunities for girls, compounded by weak enforcement and community awareness of the legal mechanisms and policies for child protection. This is the same confluence of factors (underdevelopment, failed institutions and inequalities) that contributes

29 Here, the framing of "strategic peacebuilding" by R. Scott Appleby and John Paul Lederach as a lens for analyzing conflict and imagining peacebuilding processes is relevant. See John Paul Lederach and R. Scott Appleby, "Strategic Peacebuilding: An Overview", in Daniel Philpott and Gerald Powers, eds., *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19–44.

30 The push to de-silo is also central in Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall, eds., *Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2015), and is theorized explicitly in R. Scott Appleby, "The New Name for Peace? Religion and Development as Partners in Strategic Peacebuilding," in Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 183–211.

31 United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform our World"—"Goal 16: Promote Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies", <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

to radicalization along ethnoreligious claims. Hence, the implementation of such development objectives as girls' education and prohibition against child marriages, sexual trafficking and other modalities of sexual exploitation has positive ramifications on human security, conflict and acute violence.

Specifically, DAP focused on addressing poverty by operating 52 interreligious Savings and Lending Communities (SILC) groups, which discuss children's rights in their weekly forums as well as directing savings and loans toward keeping girls in school. This program reached 529 children in five primary school Peace Clubs, cultivating child-driven rights advocacy. Each Peace Club included Muslim and Christian "chaplains," underscoring the interreligious dimensions reflected in DAP's theory of change. If children become aware of their legal rights; if religious and traditional leaders strategize ways of engaging parents and community members around traditional and religious teachings and values that support the protection of children; and if governmental and legal mechanisms are better coordinated to support the enforcement of legal protections for children; then child marriage will be reduced. DAP exemplifies the mainstreaming of religion through multisectoral development projects.

Such public good "connector" projects—the reduction of child marriage and human trafficking in Kenya, the enhancement of the capacities of local religious and traditional leaders in Mindanao to mitigate and reconcile land disputes, and TA'ALA's effort to challenge escalating patterns of violence along ethnoreligious fault-lines in Upper Egypt—highlight synergies between development theory and practice in the discussion of religion and peacebuilding.

Yet, development outcomes were often classified in the profiled cases as "spillover effects." For instance, tangible results from TA'ALA partnerships generated new forms of partnership for promoting development goals, such as a collaborative clean-up project in a Luxor neighborhood. It also enhanced emergency interventions in the aftermath of violence. In the case of Mindanao, bolstering the authority of TRLs and LTs, not surprisingly, led them to apply their conflict resolution skills to non-land-related conflicts. Likewise, community-based reconciliation projects have influenced collaboration over other local development initiatives, designed specifically to benefit women and children, such as improving health facilities and water projects. The interconnections between the 3Bs and the emphasis on TRLs, LTs and development agendas illuminate the mainstreaming of religion in conflict analysis and peacebuilding processes. Enhancing traditional authorities and local patterns of reconciliation as well as facilitating various bridging activities, to challenge "othering" and misperceptions and to reinforce governance capacities, contributes to and reinforces development outcomes (e.g. women's empowerment).

As Leguro argues, however, a more gender-sensitive A3B approach would need to focus intentionally on the inclusion of women in 3Bs activities, in order to challenge the male-dominated conflict resolution structures, which are

infused by gerontocratic norms. Notably, the focus on TRLs and LTs already presupposes and builds on the authority of male elders. The men's credibility and influence are the necessary starting points for enhancing their capacity to function as "connectors" in mediating land conflicts. The fact that all TRLs and LTs are men complicates the aspiration to establish mechanisms to include women in 3Bs activities, other public roles or even positions of authority. It also raises questions concerning how, in this interreligious action program, enhancing religious male authority can provide resources for moving beyond a collision course around land disputes through intra- and intercommunal relationship-building. At the same time, enhanced male-dominated religious authority, despite spillover effects into the domain of development work and its focus on greater quality of life for women and girls, reinforces gender inequality and patriarchal sociocultural patterns.

Indeed, the emphasis on identifying and strengthening religious leadership is central to IRA projects, as evident in the design of Capacity Strengthening for Inter-Religious Action (CIRCA). It is a three-year (2014–2017), multicountry project intended to strengthen the capacity of faith-based institutions and organizations in key areas in East and West Africa and Upper Egypt, so that they can partner more effectively and contribute to cultivating conditions for coexistence among Muslims and Christians. CIRCA was designed to improve competencies for engagement in interreligious action by focusing on facilitating partner organizations' processes of developing more effective organizational strategies for interreligious engagement, with an intended objective to encourage Muslim and Christian leaders (with an emphasis on youth) to engage collaboratively in practical "connector" projects in their own communities.

CIRCA could generate synergies between the roles that religious actors can play in advancing humanitarian and development objectives and their contribution to peacebuilding processes, the reduction of acute violence, and the construction of sustainable sociocultural mechanisms for social cohesion and human security. The connector projects, which facilitate action for the common good, demonstrate pathways for coexistence in diverse societies. However, as in other instances outside Africa, the persistent socioeconomic marginalization of certain groups is a contributing factor and a driver of violence. Hence, connector projects and broad-based action cannot proceed in isolation from policy and structural changes. It is in this conjunction that the emphasis on action and the instrumental value of certain religious actors can misleadingly gloss over the enduring significance of intra-tradition dialogue and hermeneutical contestation. Nevertheless, CIRCA's IRA emphasis and connector projects are the outcome of a three-year process of interreligious training sessions that examined peace and justice motifs and teachings in Muslim and Christian traditions, gesturing to the enduring relevance of hermeneutical and intra- and inter-tradition deep engagements with theological and religious meanings.

TALKING THEOLOGY STILL MATTERS

The relatively recent concept of interreligious action moves away from the familiar paradigm of “dialogue” and its presumed limitations in terms of tangible and measurable outcomes. Interreligious or interfaith dialogue (IFD) gained traction as relevant for peacebuilding efforts³² with the reemergence of “religion” as a category of analysis and practice (albeit marginalized) in international and global relations since 1979 and the Iranian Revolution, and more centrally with the end of the Cold War and the so-called resurgence of religion. IRA’s emphasis on action need not be interpreted as if “dialogue” is not a form of practice and action. Nor does IRA imply a neglect of “dialogue,” which remains a critical generative praxis on a variety of levels, cultivating and facilitating collaborative action. In the case study of DAP in Kenya, the instrumentality of religious leaders and traditional elders is not only analyzed in terms of their relative traction within their communities. It is also examined in terms of their ability to speak authoritatively within their traditions, employing appropriate resources and interpretive lenses, in order to argue against child marriage and related abuses permitted under religious-cultural warrants. The emphasis on engaging religious teachings and traditional praxis reflects DAP’s value-based, interfaith approach to child rights as it is combined with child-driven advocacy through Peace Clubs and the SILC groups. The 60 Coast Interfaith Council members were trained by the government and the DAP team in child abuse reporting protocols, confidentiality, paralegal action, lobbying and advocacy skills, the use of anonymous boxes installed in schools, and a children’s helpline.

This value-based approach, in which interreligious action means strategically coordinating value-based engagement of religious leaders and elders with stakeholders across a variety of communities in order to reduce child marriage, also involved training these leaders to navigate legal and other mechanisms for child advocacy and protection. Hence, the capacity of these (male) leaders to leverage their position to promote child protection was reinforced by expanding their secular skills and the scope of their activism. DAP’s effectiveness, thus, depends not only on interreligious action around the legal protection of children. It also depends on the cross-sectorial coordinated effort in which interreligious cooperation and religious-cultural intervention is but one facet of a broader campaign, involving governmental agencies, legal mechanisms and children’s own empowerment. In other words, while the religious actors acted in a secular way when reporting child abuse cases, the secularity of their reporting processes and collaborative efforts did not diminish their religious orientation and value-based interventions. It actually exposes the limits of assigning such labels as “secular” and “religious” to types of action and actors. In the final analysis, this case of interreligious action brings to the fore the relevance of inter- and intrareligious action and dialogue in changing, in a culturally sensitive

32 See, for example, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Amal Khoury, and Emily Welty, *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

manner, practices deemed “traditional” and thus authoritative. The case also conveys the intersections between underdevelopment and exploitation, on the one hand, and insecurity of vulnerable populations, on the other.

The Central African Republic (CAR) case likewise exemplifies correlations between poor governance, underdevelopment and a humanitarian crisis due to cyclical coup d'états, experienced and perceived socioeconomic marginalization, and the eruption of violence along ethnoreligious lines. Hence, CRS's Secure, Empowered, Connected Communities (SECC), implemented between 2012 and 2014, sought to strengthen social cohesion in order to enhance the capacity of communities to work collaboratively in more effective ways to respond to security challenges.

The CAR case is an effort that combines the 3Bs approach with the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) outlook and method for practice, developed by CRS in order to facilitate the best possible outcomes from binding, bonding and bridging activities. “AI recognizes that human systems are constructions of the imagination and are, therefore, capable of change at the speed of imagination,” write J.M. Watkins et al.³³ Once stakeholders refocus their perspectives, their modes of envisioning future possibilities can also shift. AI's point of departure is intentional positive inquiry (asking what's good, not what's bad) for “life giving forces,” including alternative (sometimes untapped) religious teachings and values that can become resources for positive, constructive change within organizational structures and/or group dynamics and in relations to others. To this extent, SECC resonates with DAP's value-based approach to changing social practices.

Among the accomplishments of SECC are the training of more than 300 religious leaders, government officials, civil society leaders, armed groups' members, and other key actors as ambassadors of social cohesion. Many of these leaders experienced a transformation over the course of the trainings and additional intergroup engagements. These trainees began working on cultivating tools that would enable local communities to rebuild relationships across ethnoreligious divides. Hence, another positive outcome was the establishment of at least 16 Community Social Cohesion Committees (CSCC), bringing together more than 70 villages. The CSCC are inclusive of all religions, ethnic groups, livelihoods, genders and age groups. In the case of Djin, one such committee was successful in bringing back a group of Peulhs (Muslims) who had fled to Cameroon during the violence.

The CAR case is an instructive example of employing AI and the 3Bs together while recognizing the instrumentality of religious leaders. It also highlights the transformative processes and reshifting of perspectives that are necessary for binding and bonding types of activities. The instrumentality of religious actors is expansive in that their transformative capacity does not rely solely on their relative

33 Jane Magruder Watkins, Bernard Mohr, and Ralph Kelly, *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), xxxi-xxxii.

degree of authority and respect within their communities, but also on their status as interpreters of the resources of their cultures and traditions as well as their capacity to reimagine identity boundaries as less rigid, less chauvinistic and less violent. The case resonates with the IRA program in BiH and its focus on narrative change. It also reintroduces and reinforces the importance of theological and religious literacy and interpretive skills as pertinent to change processes.

There are persistent (and familiar) shortcomings too. In the case of CAR, women and children became integrated into interreligious peacebuilding processes at the level of village-based committees, but the leadership was still male dominated, which allowed patriarchal norms to delimit the horizon of possibilities for social cohesion. Likewise, engaging in bridging activities without redressing the structural violence driving the violence and conflict only offers cosmetic fixes. Hermeneutical work through AI, facilitated and enhanced through 3Bs activities, needs to translate into tangible development dividends—the crucial synergy between development and peace. Systemic injustice needs to be redressed to forestall relapse into violence, which can be easily stoked along ethno-cultural and religious lenses and grievances.

Hence, while a “values approach” or intrafaith dialogue is integral to IRA, the emphasis remains on *action* for the “common good,” which closely follows other development and secular peacebuilding objectives. In fact, IRA’s principal departure from IFD and other paradigms is its emphasis on promoting inclusive societies and cohesion, rather than focusing only on reducing deadly forms of violence. There are precedents, of course, in Martin Luther King’s struggle against structural and cultural racism and in other instances of religious actors’ commitment to human rights’ struggles. In King’s example, he drew upon the American Constitution as much as he did on Christian sources and Gandhi. However, for the most part, the focus of RCP has been on the capacity of religious actors to reduce violence through Track II diplomacy, postwar reconciliation processes and grassroots nonviolent activism as well as through challenging wrongs by appealing to alternative interpretations of religious tradition (the prophetic thread). Alternatively, IFD focused on deepening interreligious understandings without necessarily furnishing mechanisms for shifting toward tangible cross-sectoral actions that promote social cohesion and redress underdevelopment. In the RCP literature, the precise relation between extra-traditional norms, such as human rights, and religious arguments and motivations is not theorized. Instead, one can observe a resort to the language of “authenticity,” whereby some interpretations of tradition are deemed authentic and others inauthentic. Such interpretations, once again, open the door to reductive approaches to religion as a force for “good” or “bad.”

To this extent, IRA is thoroughly embedded within a pluralistic outlook that upholds modernist and secular commitments to the construction of civic and political spaces for nonviolent conflict transformation and deepening cross-cultural and intergroup collaboration for the common good. It also implies

the cultivation of conceptions of the “common” or the “civil” as distinct from ethnoreligious and/or other particularistic forms of identification. The secularity and modernity of IRA’s underpinning normative framing do not take away from the depth of CRS’s rigorous accompaniment as a faith-based actor. Nor does it diminish the importance of religious actors in promoting and implementing peacebuilding and development objectives. Instead, IRA, as an embodied practice of religious peacebuilding, reflects the mainstreaming of religion and its subsequent relevance for an array of binding, bonding and bridging activities—mechanisms instrumental for increasing social cohesion, nonviolent mitigation of conflicts and improving quality of life.

The argument conveyed here is that increased attention to IRA can address some of the expressed limitations of traditional RCP, namely its enduring reliance on a secularist conception of “religion” as operating in a distinct (disembodied) sphere of social life. Accordingly, religious peacebuilding is seen as auxiliary to and distinguishable from secular processes of conflict transformation, healing and social justice. The turn to IRA, in contrast, illumines that interreligious action often depends on cultivating common “secular” objectives such as concerns with reduction and elimination of sexual violence against children, water pollution or illiteracy. However, rendering such objectives as “secular” may overlook the intricate modes in which religious-cultural negotiations, actors and institutions are entrenched in the status quo, and thus may overlook how religion and religious actors could contribute to promoting “secular” agendas. Therefore, the synergy with development outlooks, broadly construed, allows for the cultivation of embodied and indeed “secular” forms of religious peacebuilding.

The focus on “action” nonetheless requires paying attention to intra- and interreligious dialogue, hermeneutical contestation and religious literacy. Hence, IRA is not an alternative but rather a reshaped paradigm inclusive of inter- and intrareligious dialogue. Reaching the point where divided actors can engage in intergroup cooperation is dependent on processes of intra-communal or intrareligious dialogue and self-transformation. Such transformative moments are often facilitated through interreligious dialogue and encounters, though not exclusively. Therefore, emphasizing IRA need not entail disregard for or dismissal of interreligious dialogue as a critical form of practice continuous with tangible action measured in terms of “projects;” rather, it offers an opportunity to reflect, assess and identify, on a case-by-case basis, how religious literacy and the interpretive capacities of religious actors can play a role in generating pathways to reduce acute forms of violence and increase social cohesion. The cases featured in this book are, therefore, on the cutting edge of RCP and are not confined to this subfield. Instead, articulating pathways and synergies among various spaces of conflict transformation and social justice work through a development lens demonstrates the potential for “mainstreaming” religion through IRA.



Bosnia-Herzegovina: Choosing Peace Together (CPT)

NELL BOLTON AND EDITA ČOLO ZAHIROVIĆ

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Choosing Peace Together (CPT) project began fifteen years after the 1992–1995 war that followed the independence referendum of the former Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war transformed Bosnia from a multiethnic society (43% Bosniak, 33% Serb, 17% Croat and 7% others)³⁴ of mixed communities that lived in relative harmony into an ethnically segregated state, politically divided into two main entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), and one district, Brcko District.³⁵

CPT was designed to respond to the deep ethnic divisions and postwar trauma that continue to inhibit reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH).

³⁴ <http://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>.

³⁵ For a further accounting of ethnic divisions and alliances in the war, see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/the-bosnia-crisis-serbs-croats-and-muslims-who-hates-who-and-why-tony-barber-in-zagreb-traces-the-1539305.html>.

Reconciliation in this case is understood as re-humanizing the “other,” accepting the existence of alternative historical and political narratives, and being willing to cooperate for mutual prosperity. As ethnicity—which overlaps with religious identity with each of the three major ethnic groups having a predominant religious affiliation: Serbs as Orthodox Christians, Croats as Catholics, and Bosniaks as Muslims—was a central driver of the wartime violence, many survivors retain deeply entrenched grievances toward other ethnic groups. For example, places of suffering and anniversaries of wartime tragedies are commemorated not just to memorialize victims, but to demonize the entire ethnic, social and religious groups of the perpetrators.

Members of war victims’ associations, in particular, self-identify as being more strongly affected by the war and its lasting effects than the general population, and this dynamic had become apparent to Caritas of the Bishops’ Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Caritas BKBH) in its work with more than 60 of these associations between 2003 and 2010. War victims’ associations exist in nearly every municipality, with their membership generally corresponding to each municipality’s majority ethnic group, resulting in more Serb and Bosniak associations, and a smaller number of Croatian associations.³⁶ With more than 150,000 members, these mono-ethnic associations wield significant informal power to shape broader public opinion on the acceptability of reconciliation and possess strong mobilizing capacity. For example, in 2010 their protests generated sufficient public pressure for the BiH government to resist an IMF demand to decrease monetary support to former soldiers and war victims.³⁷ Associations are heavily politicized;³⁸ they represent major voter blocs and rely for financial support on the political parties with which their leaders are affiliated.

CPT included a focus on youth. Young people one generation removed from the war have mostly known a BiH divided into mono-ethnic enclaves. Separate ethnic identities are reinforced by segregated schools and ethno-based curricula that, at best, omit the perspective of other ethnic or religious groups and, at worst, steep young people in inflammatory nationalist rhetoric. This is especially the case in courses on history, language and religion. For example, the Serb curriculum glorifies Gavrilo Princip as a liberator, while the Bosniak curriculum portrays him as the assassin of Archduke Ferdinand. The Ottoman era, meanwhile, is presented in the Bosniak curriculum as a time of prosperity and liberation, while for Serbs it is a dark period of occupation and backwardness.³⁹

36 There are associations of former prisoners of war, of family members of those who were killed, of family members of missing persons (an estimated 12,500 people are still missing, according to the International Commission on Missing People), of ex-soldiers, and of people suffering from PTSD.

37 See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OO-Uf_4_tOg and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wca4aXVIY5Y>.

38 Iavor Rangelov and Marika Theros, “Maintaining the Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Coherence and Complementarity of EU Institutions and Civil Society in the Field of Transitional Justice,” Working Group on Development and Peace (FriEnt), November 2007.

39 The curriculum of the 1990s has not yet been incorporated into any curriculum.



Parents, teachers and the media perpetuate this fear and mistrust, wedging intractable ethnic divisions deeper into society. With little direct experience of interaction with other ethnic groups, young people have been absorbing the grievances and prejudices of the older generation, in some cases becoming even more opposed to reconciliation efforts because they feel the weight of responsibility for their parents' suffering.⁴⁰ A 2014 survey conducted among the general population in 32 municipalities revealed that older people hold more positive attitudes and greater trust toward those of other ethnicities than younger people do, despite the higher levels of intergroup contact among younger people.⁴¹

With support of their mayors, war survivors representing three different ethnicities jointly commemorated one another's sites of group suffering during an event in CPT's successor project, PRO-Future.

Velija Hasanbegovic for CRS

CHOOSING PEACE TOGETHER (CPT)

The overall goal of the CPT project was for people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds in BiH to make progress toward reconciliation, with two strategic objectives:

- **SO1: Individuals affected by the war become a positive force for reconciliation.**

This objective sought to give those still suffering from the after-effects of the war the resources and space to work through and experience release from the past. The premise was that they would then be more open to improved interethnic and interreligious relations.

40 This feature of transgenerational trauma has been noted in other conflict settings, such as Northern Ireland, see <http://www.wavetraumacentre.org.uk/uploads/pdf/1404220890--100105-WAVE-transgen-report.pdf> (44).

41 Prism Research, "Public Opinion Poll Results [PRO-Future baseline]," April 2014.

- **SO2: Targeted communities benefit from institutional support for reconciliation.**

This objective focused on local non-governmental organizations and community groups with the premise that if respected organizations show support for reconciliation, the members of these organizations may become more open to it as well.⁴²

According to the project's theory of change, IF potential spoilers are able to come to terms with their wartime experiences, THEN they will prefer to use their influence to support and spread reconciliation.

CPT was implemented from January 27, 2010 through April 27, 2014 by CRS/ Bosnia-Herzegovina (CRS/BiH), in partnership with Caritas BKBH. The project was implemented across the country by 2 full-time CRS staff and 1 full-time partner staff. Funding from USAID/CMM was complemented by a CRS cost share contribution.

The initiative led war survivors through a process of transformation from victimhood to becoming active proponents of dialogue and understanding. The cornerstone of CPT was a three-part psychosocial training on communication, trauma and forgiveness,⁴³ followed by some war survivors (22.5 percent of trainees) choosing to publicly share their stories at "Speaking Out" events. The methodology drew from Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication model as well as Eastern Mennonite University's Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) approach. It was also rooted in narrative therapy.⁴⁴ Whereas personal and collective traumas are commonly transformed into retellings that intensify feelings of hostility and vengeance toward "others," the project used narrative therapy to help participants bring forth constructive personal narratives in which the past negative experiences no longer dictate the future.

The project was tailored to the needs of young people by combining training seminars with annual Peer Peace Education Camps. Youth attendance at Speaking Out events was complemented by interactive performances using Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed⁴⁵ and an online Small School of Peacebuilding. CPT also fostered civil society engagement in peace and reconciliation through the establishment of a national Network for Building Peace (NBP); publication of a Peace Newsletter, Donor Directory, Peace Calendar, and books and documentaries; NGO capacity building, along with a small grants program for war victims' associations; and support for joint advocacy by multiethnic groups.

42 CPT Technical Narrative, unpublished.

43 In the local context, "forgiveness" implies having received an apology from the other party. CPT introduced the concept of forgiveness as an internal process not dependent on the other party's actions or non-actions.

44 Narrative therapy is a type of psychotherapy, first developed in the 1970s by David Epston and Michael White. It guides individuals in a co-creation process of developing new narratives about their lives, by helping them explore their values as well as the skills and knowledge they can use to live out these values and deal with acute issues.

45 A theatrical methodology developed by Augusto Boal designed to promote sociopolitical change by engaging audiences as active participants in exploring, analyzing, enacting, and ultimately transforming their reality, see www.theatreoftheoppressed.org.

While the project had an ethnic rather than an explicitly religious focus, religious organizations were engaged to help organize Speaking Out events and expose religious leaders and communities to these alternative narratives; to collaborate in activities such as the Peace Camps; and they also benefited from institutional strengthening support. This strategy was in recognition of the important role that religion plays in shaping attitudes, behaviors and even political standpoints in BiH.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

A recent meta-evaluation of USAID's Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) portfolio conducted by the organization Social Impact singled out CPT as the only CMM project in BiH producing "very strong reconciliation effects."⁴⁶ The evaluation report states that CPT "helped to transform some hardline nationalists into vocal, self-identified peacemakers, and...allowed them to publicly and jointly communicate their experiences in a format that amplified the reconciliation impact outwards on a much larger scale."⁴⁷

Resolving unaddressed trauma and promoting reconciliation: Participants were observed to go through several stages in their process of transformation. Initially, they connected with their deep need to resolve personal trauma and explored their curiosity about the experiences of others. Empathy was then generated by being in a safe space for storytelling and listening as well as by discussing about the past. Next, as the idea of personal responsibility was introduced, blame was no longer placed on an entire collective identity group. As the "other side" became humanized through sharing of similar war experiences and constructive discussion, an activist phase began wherein positive personal change and joint action became a possibility.⁴⁸ Survivors developed a composite group identity of persons who suffered *and* overcame severe individual traumas. They revised their previous positions and internalized a new identity and embraced a partnership spirit to create space for peer support. For example, they worked across ethnic and religious lines helping one another to find jobs, collecting money to support those in hardship, and jointly visiting places that they previously considered triggers for their traumatic experiences.

In total, 230 participants attended the individual workshops, with 75 war survivors successfully completing the entire 6-workshop series.⁴⁹ This group subsequently reported increased interaction with and understanding of people from other nationalities. In a sample of participants surveyed as part of the final evaluation of the first phase of the project in spring 2012, 96 percent

46 USAID, "Evaluative Learning Review Synthesis Report: USAID/CMM's People-to-People Reconciliation Fund, Annual Program Statement (APS)," March 2014: 243.

47 *Ibid.*, 237.

48 Barry Hart and Edita Colo, "Psychosocial peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina: approaches to relational and social change," *Journal of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas* 12, no. 1 (2014): 76-88.

49 The retention rate was affected by several factors: people moving away from the country; having to withdraw due to health problems; personal preference not to continue with the trainings; and others.



Young people participate in a CPT training exercise. *CRS/Bosnia*

reported having gained knowledge and skills to contribute to reconciliation in their communities, and all reported their belief that forgiving people from other ethnic groups is possible—a new realization for 84 percent

of participants.⁵⁰ Another survey, conducted at the end of the workshop series, showed that 71 percent of participants considered that the program significantly empowered them; 92 percent considered that workshops helped them to better understand members of other nationalities; and 83 percent declared readiness to speak publicly about their wartime experience.⁵¹ It was anecdotally observed that the more religiously devout participants seemed to go through the healing process more quickly and to forgive more readily.

Reaching out to the community: The 81 Speaking Out events, led by interethnic panels of war survivors, reached over 3,500 audience members in 17 towns with survivors' stories of trauma and reconciliation. Surveyed audiences (up to 80 percent in one location) reported that these events helped to change their attitudes toward people from other ethnic groups.

50 "CPT Final External Evaluation Report," April 2012: 14-15.

51 "CPT Final Report," July 2014: 5.

Capacity building of peer educators: Sixty-four youth participants gained capacities to serve as peer educators through 3 one-week Peer Peace Education Camps, enabling them to inform other young people on reconciliation topics. The camps provided an opportunity for additional person-to-person interaction among ethnic groups and equipped participants with skills in nonviolent communication, personal means of coping with conflict, recognizing community needs, and understanding power dynamics. This helped them to understand the role of universal human needs in peace work and to practice expressing feelings and needs. Trainings also helped participants claim personal responsibility and capacity in contributing to peacebuilding, and build a common platform.

Support for war victims' associations: Capacity building and 17 small grants were provided to victims' associations, with grants supporting public reconciliation activities, such as round tables and speaking events, and psychosocial services. War survivors of different ethnicities also worked together to lead events such as the 2011-12 observation of the International Day of Peace in 14 locations, promoting alternatives to violence and advocating for the rights of war survivors.

Broader national outreach: A documentary on CPT was produced, and 29 Peace Newsletters and 7 Donor Directory editions were published. These tools were disseminated online and through social media, and perhaps more significantly, through direct delivery to influential decision makers such as parliamentarians.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES AND SPILLOVER EFFECTS

Although not part of the original project plans, the national Network for Building Peace established through CPT has become a significant platform for peace and reconciliation in BiH. By the end of the project, it had attracted 84 dues-paying member agencies and 7 international organizations. In addition to ongoing capacity building and joint advocacy among members, the network's website (www.mreza-mira.net) had 50,000 unique visitors in the last year of the project, with the Facebook profile attracting 5,000 friends and 670 followers.

Once they began to address their trauma through the CPT workshops, many war victims came to realize the depths of their psychological wounds and found themselves in need of more robust professional psychotherapeutic support, to which the project referred them. Most of those who shared their stories at Speaking Out events reported that it had a positive healing effect; however, a few reported paradoxically feeling more anxious several days after having made themselves publicly vulnerable, even to a receptive audience. The project addressed this consequence by organizing less frequent engagements for these speakers and began providing supervision and debriefing with a psychologist.⁵²

52 Psychologists attended Speaking Out events for a period, until speakers said that this support was no longer needed.

CPT also shone a spotlight on the remaining needs of war victims' associations and their members. Project staff assisted war victims in preparing proposals to other organizations and donors, resulting in successful funding to improve the victims' socioeconomic status. By helping associations secure additional funding sources, the project helped them to gain a measure of independence from the political parties to which they are implicitly tied.

KEY FACTORS

The above-mentioned CMM report noted that it was CPT's explicit focus on reconciliation as an objective, and the project's willingness to promote open discussion of painful experiences and memories as a pathway to healing and reconciliation, that helped produce transformation at a personal and interpersonal level.

Initial training sessions were intentionally held in ethnically homogenous groups, to provide participants with the opportunity to begin working through their experiences and feelings in the relative safety of an intra-ethnic group. CPT participants were self-selected through an open call among victims' groups, without any prerequisites or further criteria. Building nonviolent communication skills, including being able to express one's own needs without doing harm to others and understanding barriers to effective communication, was therefore a necessary precursor to effective engagement in multiethnic groups.

The use of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed as a means of engaging young people was not part of the original CPT plans, but was effective in contributing to attitude change among participants. The share of surveyed participants who reported that their attitudes about the war were mostly based on the stories of people from their own ethnic background decreased from 52 percent to 37 percent after a single performance, and there was an 11 percent increase in those reporting that they had a lot in common with youth from other ethnic groups (with an additional 7 percent decrease to zero for those who felt they had "not much" in common). Scenes were related to issues of nationalism and oppression of young people. For example, in a performance created by youth from Sarajevo and East Sarajevo a Bosniak son brings home his Serbian bride and faces escalating comments and criticism from family members. At the point of peak tension, the audience is asked to enter the scenario and resolve the conflict.

SHORTCOMINGS AND THEIR PERCEIVED CAUSES

CPT's institutional focus was on civil society and community organizations, and the project made significant headway in establishing a viable network of NGOs and other organizations interested in peacebuilding. Certain activities also sought to connect participating young people with influential leaders, for example, through a visit to Parliament, and to disseminate stories of reconciliation among decision makers. At the time, this was a significant step given how closed political

leaders were to talking about reconciliation. Overall, however, the project lacked a strategy for engaging institutions and decision makers outside the civil society sector, or even for ensuring that victims' stories were heard by the authorities. Indeed, the initial intention was not to attract media to Speaking Out events, but rather to keep the focus on people-to-people interactions. A consequence of this strategic choice was that the personal and relational transformations brought about by CPT did not translate into changes on the structural level or among society at large. The NBP, meanwhile, succeeded in starting local initiatives, but these were done on an ad hoc, one-off basis with little follow-up or strategic planning to guide the actions.

Furthermore, participants in CPT trainings did not have support for “re-entry” into their own communities, where resistance to reconciliation could be quite high. The project’s core methodology was also limited in its ability to support women leaders in the reconciliation process. While a good number of women participated in the training seminars, very few were willing to share their stories at Speaking Out events, largely due to taboos on public discussion of wartime experiences of rape. CPT compensated by offering organizational and institutional support to other women’s initiatives through the NBP, thereby providing them with greater visibility.⁵³

LESSONS LEARNED

War victim stories are powerful tools: The personal stories of war victims at Speaking Out events, coupled with the teamwork they modeled during the panels, were a powerful testimony to the possibility of reconciliation: if those most harmed during the war could find a path to mutual understanding and mutual cooperation, then surely others in society could do the same. Furthermore, their joint sharing of stories helped audience members whose attitudes were shaped only by their own ethnic group’s narrative to hear—sometimes for the first time—the narrative of the “other.” This lesson was learned by the project team as well as by participants and audience members.

Young people need to be directly engaged: Young people are key stakeholders in reconciliation efforts, particularly given the de facto segregation from peers from other ethnicities; focusing only on adults is insufficient for making progress toward reconciliation on a broad scale. As CRS and Caritas BKBH became aware of this lesson, the project was revised to include a more robust youth focus.

The participation of women needs special attention: CRS and Caritas BKBH learned that intentional strategies are needed to involve women, given the barriers listed above. The Speaking Out methodology, for example, was not felt by many potential women speakers to be suitable for them and, therefore, did

⁵³ For example, see example the Women’s Court, <http://zenskisud.org/en/index.html>.

not reflect these important voices. The project team learned that it needed to pursue other ways of involving women as role models for reconciliation.

Strong media outreach is important for advancing reconciliation beyond the direct participant group: Targeted media strategies are an important element for wider dissemination of the community's progress toward reconciliation. A more intentional media strategy would have helped CPT to link its promotional efforts—one-time media training, the NBP website, documentary films and radio pieces—to the social changes the project was pursuing. It is not clear whether these materials reached a broad and influential audience. Both CRS and its donor, USAID, learned this lesson, which was reflected in the design of the follow-on project described below.

Reach out to rural communities: Finally, project participants felt it was important to extend the program (and Speaking Out events) to smaller, more rural communities. Such communities are usually more ethnically homogenous, and young people may not have the opportunity to interact with people from other ethnic groups or to learn about the suffering of others. This lesson was incorporated by CRS and USAID into the follow-on project, PRO-Future, which works simultaneously to involve broader circles of citizens in these communities as well as key people at local and national levels.

APPLIED LESSONS AND THEIR EFFECTS

CRS/BiH's current national reconciliation project, PRO-Future, provides a platform for applying lessons from CPT. For example, PRO-Future has an intensive focus on young people and is building youth leaders as agents for reconciliation. Additional women speakers have been recruited for Speaking Out events, both from war victims' associations and other networks, and additional psychosocial support is being provided to those who choose to share their stories, via quarterly supervision sessions with psychologists. The project is targeting specific municipalities (especially small, rural communities) with a comprehensive array of activities, pairing ethnically homogenous municipalities with those of different ethnicities in order to create avenues for interaction across ethnic divides. Local and national media is engaged more directly, with changes in the tone and content of reporting being noted. Key influencers, including government authorities, are being mobilized to demonstrate their support for reconciliation. Even in PRO-Future, however, moving beyond surface changes to deeper reconciliation and a willingness to act together remains a challenge.

CPT's most significant contribution to CRS's justice and peacebuilding work is the development of a methodology for helping transform trauma and suffering into a platform for establishing mutual understanding and empathy among citizens alienated from one another and separated along ethnic and religious lines. In this sense, it is an illustration of CRS's 3Bs (binding, bonding,



bridging) model⁵⁴ in the BiH context, with a particular emphasis on trauma survivors. As such, CPT's approach goes to a deeper level than many truth and reconciliation approaches, offering intensive support to victims through storytelling and group work—both *prior* to the public testimonials phase as well as after. The Speaking Out event model, in particular, has proven to be a flexible and effective method for enhancing participants' ability to take a critical view of their own and their leaders' historical and political narratives. It is being used in a variety of creative ways in the current PRO-Future project, including with religious leaders and seminarians. Special "Faith and Forgiveness" panels have been organized to encourage theology professors and students to explore their own and the narrative of the "other."

Beyond "Faith and Forgiveness," PRO-Future is engaging religious leaders much more systematically and deeply. This is done through close collaboration with the Interreligious Council of BiH and by involving local religious leaders in hosting youth exchange visits to sacred places of worship. CRS/BiH is also collaborating with faculties of theology to cultivate new religious leaders for peace.

War survivors from three different ethnic groups participate in a Speaking Out event as part of CPT's successor project, PRO-Future. *Velija Hasanbegovic for CRS*

54 The 3Bs model was first developed and applied by CRS/Philippines: binding activities create space for individual self-transformation and trauma healing; bonding activities strengthen relationships and mutual understanding within the respective identity groups; and bridging activities develop trust between identity groups and foster dialogue to assist in the resolution of conflicts. See the A3B case study in this volume for more details.

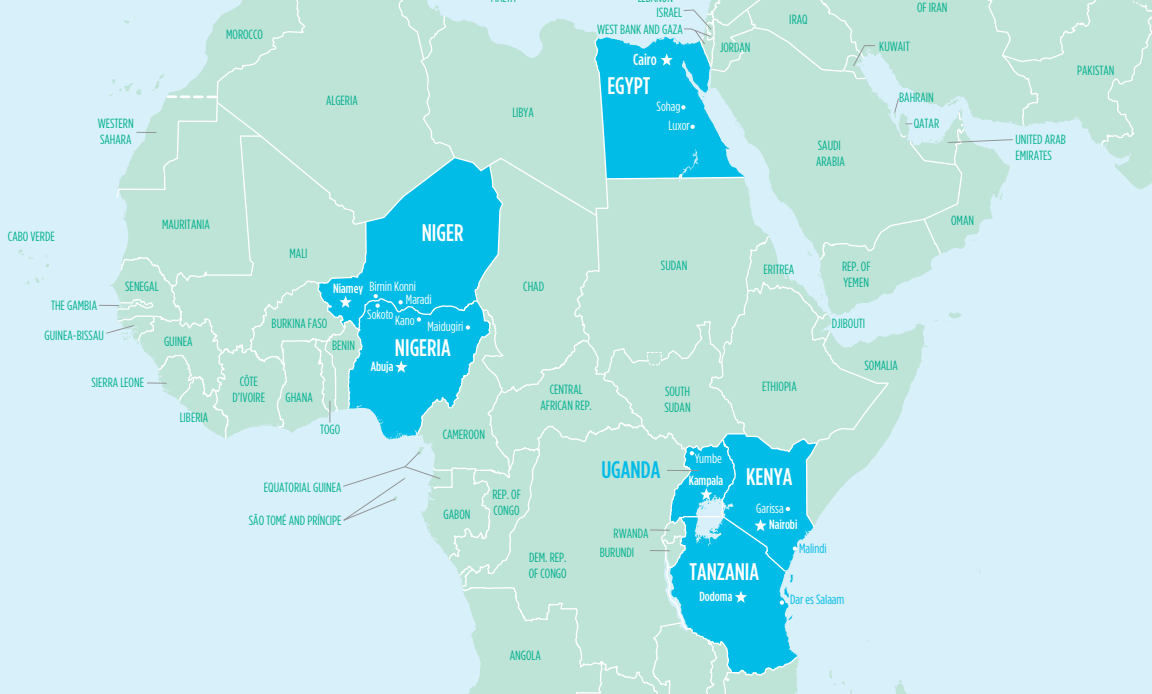
SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES

Internal: By the end of the CPT and the start of the PRO-Future project, CRS/BiH was applying a model that had worked well to cultivate buy-in from local leaders for programming designed to help displaced minorities return to their communities. This model involves forming advisory Municipal Working Groups, composed of key municipal representatives, as a structured entry point for engaging influential local leaders in reconciliation activities. PRO-Future also provides a more robust way for CRS to support one of its theories of change for minority group return, namely that returnees require dignified housing, livelihoods options and social reintegration support to make their return sustainable. In this way, CRS/BiH's reconciliation and social housing/minority group return programs are mutually reinforcing. At a broader level, CPT project staff benefitted from CRS-wide learning events and technical assistance.

External: CPT was highly instrumental in creating a viable national peacebuilding community through its support for the Network for Building Peace. This component of CPT fostered synergies among member organizations and facilitated their collective action, for example in mobilizing communities to observe the International Day of Peace. The NBP is still developing as an independent entity (beyond CPT) and has begun to clarify its mission and strategic objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Activities with target groups and in targeted communities should be more systematically sequenced.** This realignment would allow programming to build on synergies among activities and develop a stronger leadership group and constituency for reconciliation. Thereby, the influence and impact of projects like CPT could be expanded beyond the immediate project participants. Such an effort would not require additional resources but rather a reflection on key issues, for example, how one-time spoilers can use their influence to spread reconciliation instead.
- **The scope and depth of project impacts can be enhanced through additional staff and participant capacity building in engaging influential leaders at community and national levels.** In this case, the NBP could be assisted to develop a strategic plan, including an advocacy strategy to pursue policy change.
- **Peacebuilding projects should include strategies for influencing broader societal changes, both at programmatic as well as platform levels.** The changes sought in peace writ large should be articulated in theories of change, which would in turn guide activity planning and approaches.



Building Capacities for Peace across Africa

SHAMSIA RAMADHAN

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Religion plays a central role in people's daily lives in Africa. Even before the arrival of the various missionary groups, the religious demography was quite diverse and often linked to ethnic affiliation. With more intense contacts with Europeans and Arabs, communities have tended to join one of the main monotheistic religions, Christianity or Islam. While religious diversity is still very much present—including Hinduism, Judaism and of course African traditional religions—Christianity (62.9%) and Islam (30.2%) hold a dominant position in sub-Saharan Africa.⁵⁵

In the late 1990s, African countries experienced an upsurge in violent conflict with religious undertones, mainly perpetrated by insurgent groups operating in specific countries, but with regional outreach. Two notable organizations are

⁵⁵ Pew Research Center, "Religion and Public Life," in Pew Research Center, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections 2010-2050," 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/sub-saharan-africa/>.

Boko Haram, centered in northern Nigeria, and Al-Shabaab, based in Somalia. These two organizations have been able to carry out attacks and recruit fighters in neighboring countries. The new recruits are mainly young people, both male and female. Terrorism has become a key security threat in Africa, putting significant strain on relationships between people of different faiths. In recent attacks, the majority of the victims have been Christians.

These historical, demographic and social developments presented a new challenge to CRS and partners operating in multireligious contexts: What can be done to enable their staffs to help transform interreligious tensions and to promote cooperation between people of different faiths, particularly the majority Muslims and Christians living in multireligious African contexts?

CAPACITY FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY ACTION (CIRCA)

The Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action (CIRCA) project aimed at promoting joint endeavors of Muslims and Christians for peace and social cohesion in several sub-Saharan African countries and in Egypt. The CIRCA project began late in 2013 and is scheduled to end in December 2016. Funded by GHR Foundation, it was administered by one full-time coordinator/trainer with the support of an unpaid point person in each of its six country programs. In 2016, CRS added an administrative assistant and a small percentage of part-time country program support staff. CIRCA was designed to foster peacebuilding in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Egypt, Nigeria and Niger, with a particular attention to partnering with religious actors and organizations in multireligious contexts. The CIRCA project countries and partner organizations include Kenya, with the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) and the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK); Uganda, with Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) and Nile Dialogue Platform (NDP); Tanzania, with Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) and Baraza Kuu la Waislamu Tanzania (BAKWATA); Egypt, with Dioceses of Assiut, Sohag and Luxor, Center for Development Association (CDA) and Noor el Islam; Nigeria, with Dioceses of Maiduguri, Kano and Sokoto, Jama'tu Nasril Islam and the Federation of Muslim Women of Nigeria (FOMWAN); and Niger, with the Islamic-Christian Dialogue Commission.

All these six countries are experiencing intensified conflicts with religious undertones and growing tensions between Muslims and Christians. Insurgent groups with political interests have manipulated religious teachings to frame their groups' narratives, to rationalize their actions and to recruit young people. The interaction between religion and politics is driven by persistent social challenges such as allegations of discrimination. There have also been violent protests spurred by controversial information on Islam published outside the continent. Moreover, despite a long tradition of religious diversity in these countries, there is a common lack of understanding of the religious "other." This



lack of understanding leads to stereotypes and prejudices, with misinformed perceptions and divisions made worse by the fear and hatred created by the violence.

CIRCA participants are faith-based organizations, both Christian and Muslim, that work in multireligious contexts, where relations between people of different faiths have deteriorated. The project aims to build the capacity of targeted staff so that they are able to engage in projects and programs more effectively in a context of diversity.

The overall goal of the project is for CRS and partners to contribute to human development and peaceful coexistence among Muslim and Christian communities in key areas of Africa. The project seeks to improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the participants who undergo training to improve key competencies for interreligious action. A specific focus of the project is enabling institutions to jointly and proactively work together with other faith-based organizations, to deal with operational challenges in these contexts and to promote Muslim-Christian cooperation. CIRCA's two strategic objectives are outlined as follows:

In Nigeria, CIRCA participants and the interfaith committee in Kano discuss progress and management plans for the community borehole that was supported by CIRCA.
Shamsia Ramadhan/CRS

- **SO1: Partner organizations develop effective organizational strategies for interreligious engagement.** Faith-based organizations have a long history of working in and with communities, particularly in underdeveloped regions. Due to this strategic position, secular partners often work with faith-based organizations and create interreligious platforms to campaign on health, education and other issues. Faith-based organizations need to be further empowered so that they can proactively engage in such collaborations to address violence that has religious undertones.
- **SO2: Partners effectively support Muslim and Christian leaders, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities.** Young people make up a large segment of the population and often do not have sustainable livelihoods, making them vulnerable to manipulation. The project provides an alternative and prepares them to act as change agents in their communities.

In the practically focused connector projects participants have an opportunity to utilize skills acquired through the trainings to engage local communities, their leaders and their young people. A connector project generally involves bringing the community together to resolve a common community issue or need, which in turn provides an opportunity to address the conflict and to unify conflict parties around mutual benefits. Thus, a connector project provides both a platform for interaction and information exchange as well as shared benefits for the community. The aim of the interrelated project activities (both trainings and practical components) is to help intensify and widen the level of interreligious engagement from dialogue to action, by addressing shared needs at the community level. By dealing with common challenges together, people from different faiths have an opportunity to collaborate. Their interactions will likely enhance positive contact, getting to know each other better, and building mutual respect and understanding.

According to CIRCA's theory of change IF key CRS and partner staff develop more positive attitudes, improve knowledge and skills for Muslim-Christian cooperation, and have opportunities to develop and implement joint Muslim-Christian projects focused on the common good, THEN they will contribute to human development and peaceful co-existence through interfaith networks and practical action. This goal is achieved BECAUSE after emotional, ideational and competency impediments are lessened or removed, and concrete opportunities are provided, CRS and partner staff will be more open to counterparts of other faiths, and more motivated to engage in interreligious dialogue, planning and action.

As indicated, CIRCA is currently in its final year of implementation. The partners have undergone the peacebuilding trainings and are implementing connector projects. The training manual consists of the following modules: Faith-based teachings on justice and peace; Conflict sensitive interreligious action; Partnership and collaboration for interreligious action; Transformative leadership and change management; Facilitating workshops and consensus



building, particularly among youth; Cross-cultural and cross-religious communication; Mediation and negotiation; and Interreligious peacebuilding. The trainings begin by building interreligious awareness regarding Islamic and Christian scriptures and teachings on peace and social justice, and the need to be sensitive toward each other's religious beliefs and sacred practices. They then delve into a series of trainings on practical skills, which can readily be put to use in the connector projects. In the latter sessions, some time is allocated to planning concrete connector projects and joint reflection.

Representatives from CICC, including religious leaders and staff, participate in a CIRCA workshop.

Richard Mutinda/CICC

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

In total, 11 connector projects are operational and will be transferred to local communities to be managed by joint Muslim–Christian committees after CIRCA winds down. The connector projects include boreholes for water (Malindi, Kenya; Kano and Sokoto, Nigeria); table banking⁵⁶ to support small business initiatives (Konni and Maradi, Niger); environmental sanitation (Sokoto, Nigeria); farming and poultry keeping (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania); table banking and car wash (Garissa, Kenya); an early education center (Luxor and Sohag, Egypt); and a honey processing plant (Yumbe, Uganda). Addressing real development and peace issues provides an opportunity to draw some very practical lessons on what works and what does not in interreligious action.

⁵⁶ Table banking provides revolving funds for local women where the entire amount pooled for the group can be borrowed by the women to support small businesses. In line with religious principles, no interest is charged on the borrowed principal.



Women involved in the connector project in Konni, Niger discuss progress made and challenges faced. *Shamsia Ramadhan/CRS*

Enhanced public interaction between Muslim and Christian participants as well as collaboration between religious leaders.

Over 100 participants from the six countries underwent the CIRCA training. Seeking to engage the same groups of participants in the trainings—while difficult to maintain in practice—created a platform for the Muslim and Christian participants to develop a sense of togetherness and purpose. Muslim and Christian participants from Nigeria stated that they are no longer afraid to be seen working together (before the training, they did not want to be publicly associated). The cooperation between the Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of the

Catholic Diocese of Sokoto and the Sultan of Sokoto Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III further underlines the growing interreligious alliance. A female participant reported that she attends connector project planning meetings in the Catholic parish, which was once unimaginable.

Sustained engagement has enabled participants to internalize and apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the trainings.

For example, sessions on partnership for interreligious community action, the facilitation of workshops and consensus building enabled the partners to effectively deliberate on choosing their connector projects, the locations and plans for implementation. In Niger, the women and youth who implemented the connector project reported receiving requests from other community members who wished to join the interfaith initiatives. In Malindi, Kenya, religious leaders who are participants in CIRCA are also members of the county security committee. They shared that the knowledge and skills acquired have enabled them to better articulate peace and security issues during the meetings and gain recognition for their contribution.

The scale of the impact of the connector projects has been limited due to local dynamics. Outreach to community and youth leaders who may strongly oppose interreligious cooperation has also been limited. However, in Niger young people are indirectly engaging with hardliners through the project, for example, by broadcasting messages about peace and social cohesion via a public address system.

LESSONS LEARNED

In general, CIRCA has been well received by local administrations, community elders and religious leaders, and supported by key stakeholders during connector project start-ups. For instance, the Tanzania Episcopal Conference donated the necessary land for the Malindi youth farming and poultry keeping projects. In Kano, land for the borehole was donated by the community. In Sokoto, Nigeria, the environmental project began after the Sultan of Sokoto endorsed the project. In all contexts, community backing for the connector projects has made it possible for the teams to move ahead with implementation. Specific lessons from CIRCA include the following:



CIRCA participants in Maiduguri, Nigeria, review the results of a conflict analysis done as part of a training session. *Shamsia Ramadhan/CRS*

Coordinated and well-targeted engagement of religious and community leaders greatly facilitates interreligious action: Engaging respective religious leaders from the Muslim and Christian communities from the very beginning has helped sustain participation. In Nigeria, Niger and Egypt the training workshops started after inception meetings with the bishops and leaders of participating Muslim organizations. In Tanzania, separate meetings were held with Tanzania Episcopal Conference and BAKWATA leaders, and the bishops and religious leaders designated participants from their respective institutions. In Niger, the bishop organized courtesy meetings with the chef de canton, the mayor and the prefecture. With the community leaders and local administration supporting the project, the youth experienced minimum resistance from the community toward the connector project, and they were also able to get assistance from local authority institutions, which waived the permit fees for the project. Regular project updates also helped address bottlenecks and establish connections between religious and community leaders. In Tanzania, internal challenges originally delayed implementation of the connector project, but a committee that brought together Muslim and Christian representatives helped end the stalemate and has continued to provide guidance to the project. Some religious leaders attended opening workshop sessions, but the involvement of leaders who did not participate in the trainings is an additional form of support, and these leaders continue to serve as reference points for the planned activities. Finally, particularly in high security risk regions there is a reliance on influential relationships in the community. Religious leaders used their positions to reach out to local authorities and engage with policymakers, while local community leaders helped support interreligious engagement.

Representation of all faith groups is fundamental for interreligious

engagement: It is important to take into account the different faith groups in each context and to ensure adequate representation, especially where the religious demography is disproportionate. Recognition and representation helps manage local power dynamics and strengthens the credibility of the engagement with the community. CIRCA's experiences in Niger and Tanzania provide illustrations. Participants urged project staff to include groups that had not taken part in the first workshop. In Tanzania, initially TEC and BAKWATA were identified as partners, but then these two institutions requested the inclusion of the Christian Council of Tanzania, which represents a substantial part of the non-Catholic Christian population. In Niger, the Islamic-Christian team initially had only Catholic clergy participants, but an effort was made to ensure that subsequent workshops included representatives from the Muslim community. When challenges during implementation emerged, the Muslim participants were instrumental in finding solutions that were agreeable to all participants. The experiences in Niger and Tanzania indicate that including all faith groups and drawing on existing community institutions based on respect and tolerance can help ensure that the wider population identifies with the process.

Building on existing structures and initiatives supports project start-up

and strengthen capacity for community engagement: With the exception of AOSK, all CIRCA partners had already been involved in some kind of interreligious engagement. The majority of participants took part in ad hoc actions, initiated externally by stakeholders who recognized the potential of religious institutions. Many faith-based actors had been engaged in awareness creation and civic education campaigns, but few had moved toward long-term community engagement. Their earlier activities provided a launching pad for CIRCA, despite the operational challenges in shifting from short-term events to sustained community engagement.

Lack of partner personnel on the ground and limited resources (financial and nonfinancial) can create serious challenges, especially for the

implementation of practical activities: Effective interreligious engagement requires committed human resources and community presence. Lack of full-time program staff and the absence of dedicated implementing partners or ongoing projects on the ground made the launching of some connector projects difficult and expensive. In Tanzania, Nigeria and Uganda some of the participants were not organization staff but volunteers. Partners in Uganda and on the Kenyan coast had not been in the areas identified for the implementation of their connector projects for over a year because they lacked resources to continue engaging with the respective communities. This situation resulted in weak contact with the communities and reliance on older conflict and context analyses. On the other hand, partners who did have a presence and ongoing activities on the ground were able to begin or continue engaging with communities (AOSK in Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Egypt and Tanzania).



Regular conflict analysis and updates are crucial for effective and informed engagement: CIRCA partners were active in regions experiencing violence, but had not regularly conducted conflict analysis to help understand more deeply the causes of conflict, and the interests and positions of the different faith groups. Implementing a peacebuilding program without a deep understanding of current conflict dynamics undermines the capacity of organizations to engage effectively. This problem emerged during the implementation of connector projects. Several partners had been involved in addressing conflicts in the area but did not have an updated conflict analysis. The project's flexibility allowed them to conduct a conflict analysis as a preliminary activity, providing partners with a point of re-entry into the community and for the participation of the community in identifying the connector project. The partner organizations valued the opportunity to reassess the current situation on the ground, enabling them to better understand the deep-seated contextual dynamics and, thereby, better apply the principles of conflict sensitivity and partnership. Existing analyses conducted by other stakeholders can serve as a basis for this review.

CIRCA participants strategize together on the implementation of their connector project during a reflection session in Luxor, Egypt.
Shamsia Ramadhan/CRS

High staff turnover reduces overall organizational gains in capacity: Partner organizations in Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania and Egypt had to replace the initially assigned contact persons for the project. Furthermore, the number of participants from BAKWATA and AOSK declined as the project progressed. Turnover and irregular individual participation over the course of a three-year project should be anticipated and addressed by focusing more on building organizational capacity than on individuals. This means working with institutional leaders so that they ensure internal knowledge sharing with staff

who do not attend the training sessions as well as organizational learning and application of lessons.

SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES

The specific role for CRS in interreligious action has been to help empower and inspire participating faith-based organizations and their staff by improving capacities for interreligious action. CRS used existing networks and resources to develop robust interreligious peacebuilding projects. CIRCA relied on CRS' internal technical and financial support to enhance interreligious project design and reach. From its very inception, country programs participated in program conceptualization and design, and identified faith-based institutions that could participate. Internally, various units involved in capacity building and peacebuilding have supported and continue to support implementation both technically and financially. Strength in Solidarity (SiS), a capacity building program for partnership, supported the start-up of CIRCA. This enhanced the project's ability to conduct a baseline survey of partner organizational and staff capacity, and helped with the development of custom-made trainings to address existing capacity gaps. The CIRCA program manager and a senior SiS manager also collaborated in conducting a SiS training in South Sudan on partnership strengthening, enabling SiS and CIRCA to build on already existing capacity and training resources within CRS. CRS' Africa Justice and Peace Working Group (AJPWG) supported activities by funding additional connector projects, allowing more participants to engage in the practical, everyday aspects of the project. The AJPWG has also supported CIRCA through the participation of a Justice and Peacebuilding Technical Advisor in some of the training sessions within East Africa.

There are, however, both synergies and challenges when implementing more than one interreligious project in the same country. In Egypt, CIRCA and TA'ALA (see case study in this volume) worked with and through the same partners. These partners at times felt overwhelmed with the training sessions in both projects. Special care was taken not to duplicate content but rather improve and build on what was already covered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional capacity for interreligious action should be strengthened and expanded. To achieve holistic and integrated programming, institutional capacity building for interreligious peacebuilding should engage not only specialists who are implementing peacebuilding actions but also other staff engaged in humanitarian response, development initiatives and service provision. This support should be underpinned by a shared vision and long-term strategies. Additionally, faith-based organizations embarking on interreligious action should provide predictable and sustainable budgetary and nonfinancial resources into the foreseeable future. Currently, most of the participants are youth volunteers with no guarantee of employment by the organizations.

- **Common platforms that reflect shared community interests and values should be fostered.**

Creating a common platform founded on common community interests and shared values can help multireligious communities and faith-based institutions overcome tensions and violence. By reflecting and acting on shared values, faith communities can promote better understanding of the religious “other” and counteract negative attitudes and actions.

- **Interreligious partnerships should be built on mutual respect and commitment.**

The potential for successful interreligious action is enhanced when actors in faith-based organizations see each other as equals, and are prepared to engage jointly in communities for extended periods of time. Each organization should work internally to forge the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for interreligious partnership, and build its capacity to deal internally and externally with issues that can undermine partnership and drive wedges between communities.



CIRCA participants from Kano, Nigeria engage in stakeholder analysis during a conflict analysis training. *Shamsia Ramadhan/CRS*



Central African Republic (CAR): Platforms for Social Cohesion

JEAN BAPTISTE TALLA

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Central African Republic (CAR) is located in a volatile region impacted by violent conflict in the neighboring countries of South Sudan, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Over the past few years, its population has witnessed terrible violence while suffering widespread displacement and massive trauma, especially in the southeast, where the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)⁵⁷ has operated for many years.

Since its independence in 1960, CAR has been plagued by coup d'états and rebellions. Decades of social injustice and poor governance, characterized by high levels of corruption and very weak social infrastructure and services, have strained the country's social cohesion, leaving many ethnic groups feeling neglected and marginalized, especially in the country's northern

57 Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is a rebel group, led by Joseph Kony, operating in northern Uganda, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

region. To redress this situation, the Seleka⁵⁸ coalition took up arms against the government that they considered to favor the President's friends and relatives while excluding most of the population from development gains. They took power in March 2013, committing numerous atrocities and specifically targeting Christians. In response to these acts, an armed self-defense group known as Anti-Balaka⁵⁹ fought back, plunging the country further into violence and insecurity.

In a country dominated by Christians, the Anti-Balaka were perceived as a Christian militia. In fact, the Anti-Balaka had no organized religious affiliation, and many of its members were faithful to traditional practices. For its part, Seleka was perceived as a Muslim militia,⁶⁰ when in fact it also included Christians who felt excluded by the regime. Many Central Africans, particularly young people who already were facing bleak employment prospects, joined the armed groups, prolonging the violence. Many observers erroneously or simplistically identified the conflict in CAR as religious in character, in spite of appeals and advocacy from Central African religious leaders to dissociate the atrocities of the two groups from any religious faith.

Over a period of three years, from December 2012 through 2015, the entire population suffered grave hardships, irrespective of religious affiliation. Many Christians were traumatized and displaced in internal camps. Muslims fled the country in large numbers, with tens of thousands sheltering in camps across the border in Chad, Cameroon and DRC. The civil war destroyed the social cohesion of a country where people had traditionally lived in relative harmony in spite of their religious and ethnic differences.

State authority and institutions, jeopardized by poor governance and the mismanagement of natural and human resources, continued to decay. Moreover, whereas the economy, government and infrastructure are highly centralized around Bangui, the rest of the country is comprised of bush, isolated villages and a thin government presence with little social infrastructure. As a consequence of the violence, many public institutions in CAR collapsed and administrative authorities abandoned their workstations, leaving communities under the rule of armed groups and in very poor living conditions.

In contrast to the fragility of the state, religious institutions retained strong and widespread respect among most Central Africans. In December 2012, prior to the Seleka takeover, an Interreligious Platform (IRP) led by Catholic Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Imam Omar Kobine Layama and Protestant Pastor

58 Seleka, established as a coalition of political parties and rebel forces in August 2012, transformed into the Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) in July 2014.

59 Anti-Balaka was established in 2009 as a self-defense militia to fight highway banditry. In 2013, Anti-Balaka took up arms against Seleka and committed many acts of violence, resulting in widespread insecurity in the country.

60 The identification of Islam with Seleka was also due to the perception that Seleka was externally-driven by forces from Chad and Sudan, which had presumed ties with radicalized Muslim leaders, clerics and ideologies from outside CAR.



Nicolas Guérékoyame Gbangou, was established as an interlocutor for peace at national and international levels. They won the Sergio Vieira de Mello Peace Prize for their efforts. From the start of the recent violent conflict, the IRP has been instrumental in creating space for dialogue and advocating for peace while denouncing division and providing an inspiring example of ecumenical and interreligious unity. Platform leaders have established themselves as prominent actors for peace, engaging the Government of CAR, the National Transitional Council (CNT),⁶¹ the international community, opposing groups active in the conflict, their respective faith communities, and the people of CAR. Local religious leaders and affiliated women's and youth platforms have replicated this broad interfaith approach to promote peace and unity across the country.

Displaced residents take shelter within a church under construction at the residence of Catholic Archbishop Nzapalaingao in Bangui in December 2013.
Sam Phelps for CRS

SECURED, EMPOWERED, CONNECTED COMMUNITIES (SECC)

In response to these complex challenges and promising interfaith responses, CRS negotiated the extension of the ongoing Secured, Empowered, Connected Communities (SECC) project to include a specific objective to “promote social cohesion and address interreligious and intra-community conflicts.” Together with several partners⁶² and the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), CRS designed and implemented SECC

61 “Le Conseil National de Transition.”

62 Partners include Search for Common Ground, Caritas Bangassou, Bouar and Bangassou Diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions, and the Central African Interreligious Platform.

from 2012 until 2015.⁶³ The specific objective was consistent with the then transitional government's appeal for peace. The transitional government was established in January 2014 to mitigate the crisis and to rebuild the state. It led a national process to encourage dialogue at community and national levels, culminating in national elections between December 30, 2015 and March 31, 2016. Although a new national assembly and government came to power in 2016, it will take time for them to reassert state control over the entire country.

The general goal of SECC was to “enable cohesive, self-directed and connected communities to avoid or reduce their exposure to threats associated with the presence of armed groups and ongoing conflict in areas most vulnerable to attack by LRA forces.” The project provided capacity building to strengthen social cohesion, access to information, communication between and among LRA-affected communities, and connectivity with local, national and international actors. The theory of change postulated that IF target communities improve social cohesion, THEN they will work together more effectively to respond to the security challenges they face.

Following the new conflict dynamic that erupted in 2013, SECC was expanded to encompass social cohesion programming in northwest CAR and the capital Bangui, which were particularly badly affected by identity-based violence. Thus, a fourth strategic objective was adopted in January 2014:

- **SO4: Support communities' abilities to maintain and promote social cohesion⁶⁴ and address interreligious and intra-community conflicts.**

The data reported in this case study are focused on activities and achievements under this additional interreligious and intra-community objective, implemented by nine CRS Staff and more than 40 full-time staff working with Justice and Peace Commissions at various levels.

Under SO4, SECC organized project activities to mobilize and engage people for social cohesion in northwest CAR and Bangui. The project strengthened the organizational and institutional capacities of the Catholic Church's Diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions (DJPCs), so that they could be more effective peacemakers at national, diocesan and parish levels. It also accompanied the DJPCs in the creation of community social cohesion committees (SCCCs) to mobilize members for cohesion actions. Similarly, it improved the capacity of religious leaders to build peace and supported them to advocate for rebuilding the broken intercommunal relationships in the country.

63 SECC was extended until 2017.

64 CRS' definition of social cohesion emphasizes trust, reciprocity and strong social links between and among citizens and civil society groups (horizontal bridging), on the one hand, and a strong social contract between citizens and the state (vertical linkage), on the other. The horizontal axis requires strengthening social organization on the basis of equity, solidarity and the integration of the different social groups—beyond racial, ethnic, religious and other differences. The vertical dimension refers to links of confidence and participation in the decision-making processes between the citizens and the state.



The component began with a start-up workshop in February 2014, followed by the opening of two new sub-offices in the northwest in Bossangoa and Bouar, recruitment and training of staff,⁶⁵ equipping of local DJPC partners, and involvement of authorities in the selection of 16 target communities. In these communities, 18 CSCCs and 68 sub-CSCCs⁶⁶ were established through participatory processes led by trained staff and Justice and Peace Commission members. These CSCCs brought together 20 communities, covering more than 70 individual villages and neighborhoods. The committees were inclusive of all Christian denominations, ethnic groups, livelihoods, gender and age groups. In a few cases, they also brought Muslims and Christians together. The Bossangoa and Bouar teams trained 760 religious and community leaders and CSCC members in social cohesion building.

Over 100 Bouar residents—Christians, Muslims, men and women, young people and elders—come together with representatives of government and self-defense groups at a meeting convened by the Interreligious Platform to discuss preserving peace and security in their community.
Erin Lewis/CRS

Through workshops targeting divided groups, an approach combining CRS's 3Bs and the 4Ds of Appreciative Inquiry was used to help visualize conflict and build a shared vision of social cohesion. The 3Bs are Binding, Bonding, and Bridging. Binding activities create space for individual self-transformation; Bonding activities strengthen relationships and mutual understanding within

65 A total of 36 social cohesion and peacebuilding agents were trained and employed by the project in the northwest.

66 Sub-CSCCs were attached to CSCCs in remote areas. Members operated on a voluntary basis and were monitored by CSCC members accompanied by Justice and Peace Commission staff.

respective identity groups; and Bridging activities develop trust between and among two or more identity groups. The 4Ds are the major steps of Appreciative Inquiry, aiming to encourage conflicting parties to think and act positively: Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver. The 3Bs offer an effective means to bring single identity and mixed groups together for introspection, dialogue and joint action; while the 4Ds provide positive lenses for transformational change. The following integrated framework was designed to guide this innovative process.

BOX 1: CRS' 3BS AND 4DS APPROACH

		Appreciative Inquiry				
		Discovery through an appreciative view	Dream for an appreciative vision	Design by reflecting on building together		Deliver by engaging in actions
				unfavorable	favorable	
The Three Bs	Binding	What do I have that's positive?	What is my dream for a more socially cohesive society?	What can I do to improve myself toward achieving greater social cohesion?	On which personal qualities can I build to achieve social cohesion?	What can I do?
	Bonding	What positive qualities does my group possess?	What is the dream of our group for our country?	What can my group do to improve internal cohesion?	On what intragroup traits can we build social cohesion?	What can my group do?
	Bridging	What positive qualities do others have?	What dream can we all share for peace and harmony in our land?	What should we improve in our intergroup relations?	What intergroup qualities can we build on to construct a harmonious future?	What activities can we engage in together for strengthened social cohesion?
		What positive qualities do we and others have in common?				

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

Training of religious leaders: The SECC team began working with the Interreligious Platform in Bangui with the aim of training Catholic, Muslim and Protestant leaders on social cohesion principles and methodology. From April 9 to 17, 2014, three social cohesion workshops were organized in Bangui for priests and Catholic community leaders, pastors and Protestant community leaders, and imams and Muslim community leaders, respectively. By applying Binding and Bonding steps, these single identity group trainings led to self- and group-perception change. Thirty-three leaders representing the three faith communities participated in a joint meeting to apply the Bridging step. Together they created a dream of social cohesion, a shared vision and an action plan to sensitize their fellow Central Africans. They also developed a joint



barometer⁶⁷ of social cohesion in the country. Thirty-five participants representing the state, the different faith communities and civil society, selected on the basis of their commitment and abilities, were trained as trainers. At least three-quarters of the trainees facilitated social cohesion activities in their organizations and institutions.

Empowering women: The participation of women was also highly encouraging. Catholic, Protestant and Muslim women workshop participants led social cohesion awareness sessions in their respective places of worship, transcending religious barriers.

Improved intercommunity dialogues, cooperation and engagement: Communities began to examine their views critically and to see themselves differently, opening the way to coexistence with other ethnic groups. In the remote village of Njim, villagers succeeded in bringing back a group of Peulhs (Muslims) who had fled into Cameroon at the height of the violence. In Kabo, the population created a mixed herder-agricultural committee composed of Fulani (Muslim) herders, and non-Muslim (primarily Christian) groups. This committee helped the two communities plan, schedule and conduct their livelihood activities peacefully and in harmony with each other.

Archbishop of Bangui, Dieudonné Nzapalainga, kicks off the match during the ‘Olympique Real de Bangui’ at the Stade Barthelemy Boganda in May 2014. All events of the day were organized by CRS. *Catianne Tijerina for CRS*

67 The Social Cohesion Barometer is a tool that measures attitudes and opinions on 18 indicators, grouped according to three categories: sociocultural, economic and political. It can be applied in intra- and intergroup settings to stimulate critical thinking and to generate discussion about perceived levels of social cohesion.

Many trainees testified to the changes they and their groups went through. For instance, in the 7th district of Bangui, the Anti-Balaka forces had been responsible for destruction and desecration of the mosque. An ex-Anti-Balaka officer and veterans who attended the training later joined with the local imam to oversee the reconstruction of the mosque.

Risk mapping: Finally, a mapping of risks and resources in 18 communities was carried out in relation to this project. This mapping led to the design of 12 connector projects, including the rehabilitation of schools, the construction of a playground, and an open space for dialogue.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES OR SPILLOVER EFFECTS

The project produced several unintended, but positive spillover effects. Given the project's initial successes, the Ministry of Communication and National Reconciliation requested that CRS expand the workshop series to include key government officials, civil society actors, leaders of political parties and armed groups, including Seleka and Anti-Balaka. Although the request was unexpected, CRS, with the assistance of the Africa Justice and Peacebuilding Working Group (AJPWG), trained more than 1,300 men and women as ambassadors of social cohesion.

Many of the workshop participants played important roles in CAR's transition out of the crisis. For example, during the consultations to prepare the national dialogue, representatives of various faith groups and state institutions were chosen from among the project trainees. Similarly, participants at the Brazzaville Forum for Peace, including representatives of women's groups, received CRS training in social cohesion before going to the consultation.⁶⁸

Project staff and participants also seized the opportunity to organize a week-long campaign for peace and reconciliation in May 2014, calling upon CRS staff worldwide and Americans to act and pray for CAR. Linked to this campaign, workshop participants facilitated a public event in Bangui to promote social cohesion and engage divided groups, cultural figures and the media. These events contributed to showcasing the interreligious collaboration for peace by religious leaders and provided an opportunity to increase the solidarity of Christians across the U.S. with the people of CAR.

Finally, because of interreligious efforts led by the IRP with SECC support, Bouar became an example of peaceful coexistence for much of the country. During a meeting with CRS, the Imam of the Central Mosque of Bouar shared a story of a Muslim driver who, while visiting the north, unexpectedly fell into the hands of a violent local militia. When the driver mentioned that he was from Bouar, the militia admitted that they considered Bouar a haven of interreligious peace and spared the driver's life.

68 The Brazzaville Forum for Peace took place in July 2014, and the Bangui Forum was held on May 3, 2015.



KEY FACTORS

The flexibility of the donor and CRS leadership allowed SECC to extend its operations geographically and thematically, by including the social cohesion component, in response to the changing nature of conflict in CAR. This elasticity provided the opportunity to respond to critical needs in Bangui and the northwest. Buy-in and support from key Catholic, Protestant and Muslim religious leaders opened doors to more confident engagement by state actors, civil society organizations and many community members. A diverse partnership and increased collaboration between CRS' social cohesion staff in CAR and the agency's AJPWG established a dynamic network that added value to SECC implementation. This collaboration produced the innovative 3Bs and 4Ds approach.

CRS and its partners host a day for religious leaders to visit and pray with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Bangui in May 2014.
Catianne Tijerina for CRS

SHORTCOMINGS AND THEIR PERCEIVED CAUSES

Project impact would have been greater if training outcomes had been capitalized on to effectively engage the governance and social injustice issues identified as key conflict drivers. Representatives of all key state institutions in charge of the political transition underwent the training, but there was no follow-up to ensure that the knowledge acquired was applied consistently. Many social cohesion workshop participants contributed to the national peace process. CRS and its partners could have increased the project's visibility by linking former participants to create an alumni network, and by monitoring and documenting post-workshop contributions to peace.

The project emphasized the horizontal dimension of social cohesion but did not engage high-level political and military groups. Anti-Balaka and Seleka members requested CRS support to organize a joint workshop, but in-house capacities to provide the requested support were lacking. Also, the SECC project lacked qualified local personnel, who could ensure the continuity and sustainability of the training's overall achievements.

LESSONS LEARNED

Displacement of communities after violent conflicts hampers bridging

activities: An immediate post-violence context, such as in CAR, makes the bridging step very difficult to achieve. Owing to the massive displacement of Muslim families during the crisis, many previously diverse areas had become almost entirely homogenous. Building bridges between Muslim and Christian communities was often out of the question.

Joint visioning is possible even in cases of protracted and intense conflict:

Even in a very challenging context with a devastated social fabric, groups of concerned individuals can come together and envision a future of hope and prosperity for themselves and their communities.

Self-reflection is a very important initial step for communities to be able to engage with each other:

A path toward reconciliation can be cleared if the identity groups go through an initial phase of self-reflection to overcome their personal and collective prejudices and fears. This learning inspired SECC program leaders to look into cross-border programming in Chad and Cameroon, and to extend social cohesion activities to CAR refugees. Assessments were carried out and a cross-border social cohesion program was launched.⁶⁹

National-level peacebuilding efforts should integrate engagement of key national and state stakeholders from the beginning:

To foster strategic peacebuilding at the national level, it is important to collaborate with key institutions and to invest human and financial resources in sustaining the dissemination and utilization of the knowledge gained. The momentum created by SECC's social cohesion program would have been more sustainable if the vertical dimension had been intentionally planned for and implemented.

SECC made several notable contributions to CRS's justice and peacebuilding work. Because the local CRS team adopted the policy to integrate social cohesion with other sector programs in CAR, beneficiaries in project areas made significant progress in keeping the peace while focusing on agriculture, livelihoods, food security and temporary shelter. Expanding SECC into the DRC permitted the vast region of Ituri to improve its connections with the outside

⁶⁹ During social cohesion workshops conducted by CRS for Central African Muslim refugees and their host communities in Cameroon in August 2016, the refugees expressed their desire to reconcile with their Christian neighbors in CAR and to return home as soon as possible.



world. The innovation of applying CRS' 3Bs approach in combination with the 4Ds of Appreciative Inquiry encouraged workshop participants to come to grips with trauma and grief more rapidly. The following useful tools emerged from the work in CAR:

- A Social Cohesion Training Guide of more than 60 individual tools and exercises provided detailed instructions on how to support community members to rebuild social cohesion.
- A Social Cohesion Integration Diagnostics Application Tool (SCIDAT) helped CRS country teams and other NGOs gauge their readiness to integrate social cohesion activities with health, agricultural, livelihoods and emergency response initiatives.
- A Social Cohesion Barometer, applied in workshop settings in CAR, was useful for generating an informed debate about levels of public trust and solidarity measured across sociocultural, economic and political dimensions.

Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga and Iman Omar Kobine Layama work together with Protestant counterparts to spread messages of tolerance and reconciliation.
Sam Phelps for CRS

SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES

The SECC project was a reflection of the value of cross-sector synergies and cross-learning, and was made stronger because these existed. The social cohesion approach was built on the 3Bs used in Mindanao, and the Appreciative Inquiry approach was adapted from the CRS partnership toolkit. Synergies and linkages were extremely important, as was the need to ensure that they were appropriately adapted to the relevant contexts for enhanced impact.



Imam Idriss Mohammed prays for internally displaced persons at the Monastère of Boy Rabe in May 2014. *Catianne Tijerina for CRS*

CRS implemented the original SECC project with Search for Common Ground, Caritas and the Justice and Peace Commissions of the Catholic Church. These institutional linkages built on the strengths and the distinct contributions of the various organizations, ultimately improving the added value of the project.

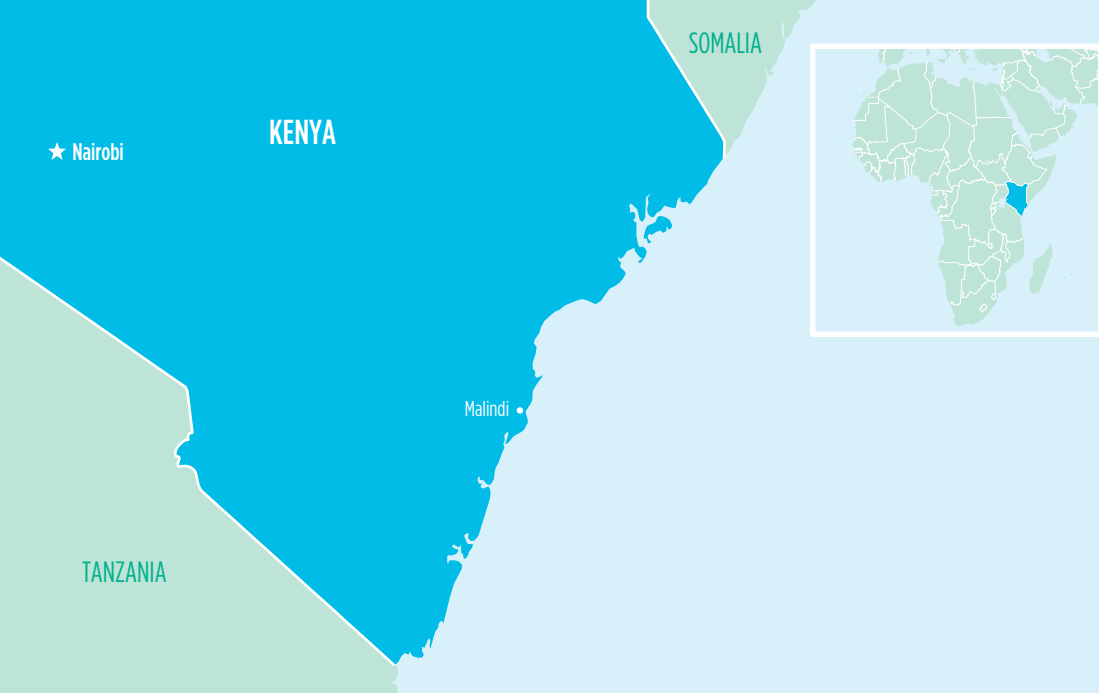
CRS, World Vision, Islamic Relief, Aegis Trust, Palo Alto University, John's Hopkins University and the Central African Interreligious Platform learned from SECC's teamwork model and formed a broad consortium capable of providing multifaceted programs and services to Central Africans. Under the leadership of the IRP, these institutions are expected to continue to play leading roles in peacebuilding and recovery efforts for social cohesion in CAR. The consortium received funding from USAID and private partners to support civil society, government and private sector actors through the "Central African Interreligious Peacebuilding Partnership" (CIPP) project, which was launched in February 2016 to strengthen, expand and decentralize the IRP's activities in order to extend its coverage at the prefecture and community levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **To promote sustainable peacebuilding impacts, vertical social cohesion should be strengthened by working closely with national government and CSOs.** A CRS internal learning exercise conducted in January-February 2016 noted that

SECC SO4 enjoyed some success in strengthening horizontal social cohesion, particularly in Bouar Diocese. Stronger contributions toward achieving peace, security, and re-establishing social welfare could be made by working with government and CSOs to strengthen vertical social cohesion. Such efforts could also exert much needed influence and impact on national-level peace processes.

- **SECC and similar projects should intentionally and strategically support resource management, reconciliation and election processes.** Social cohesion is a formidable challenge, and it should be brought up to the national scale, in order to enhance its visibility and potential contribution to safeguarding the tenuous peace in CAR.
- **Skilled staff should be recruited for documentation and communication to ensure institutional and sustainable learning.** This is an important investment that will help organizations capture the lessons and resulting project adaptations made in response to a dynamic conflict context. It would further inform and strengthen peacebuilding programming, both within the organization and across the entire sector.



Coastal Kenya: United for Children’s Rights

GRACE NDUGU

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The history of Kenya’s coastal region is marked by European and Middle Eastern explorations, the slave trade and a rich Swahili culture. The region is widely known today for its tourism,⁷⁰ warm sandy beaches, luxurious hotels and fascinating wildlife. It has a diverse, multireligious population with large numbers of both Muslims and Christians as well as followers of traditional religions.

Despite its allure, the region is poorer than much of Kenya. It suffers from interethnic tensions, complex land ownership disputes, real or perceived marginalization of indigenous communities, and recurrent electoral violence. The region also experiences interreligious tensions, with suspicions and mistrust connected with Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab terror attacks and youth radicalization. It also suffers from a high incidence of violations of children’s

⁷⁰ Tourism in Kenya is the second largest source of foreign exchange revenue following agriculture, see Harm J. de Blij, Peter O. Muller, Jan Nijman, and Antoinette M. G. A. Winkler Prins, *The World Today: Concepts and Regions in Geography*, 4th Edition, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, 2012).

rights, including child marriage, with early pregnancies and school dropouts contributing to low education levels and a cycle of poverty.

According to national demographic and health survey data, over a quarter of Kenyan women aged 20 to 24 are married before the age of 18, and 6 percent before the age of 15. Moreover, only 22 percent of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have completed primary school; only 14 percent have completed secondary school,⁷¹ and 24 percent never received any formal schooling.⁷² The commercialization of “dowry” functions as a coping mechanism for poverty, and CRS stakeholders identified the degradation of moral values and economic poverty as two major underpinning causes. A survey conducted by UNICEF and the Kenya Government on sex tourism and the sexual exploitation of children at the coast showed that these interrelated factors are exacerbated by the poor enforcement of child protection-related laws and policies.⁷³ It is estimated, moreover, that up to 30 percent of all 12-18-year-olds along the Coast are involved in casual sex work, driven by sex tourism and real or perceived lack of alternatives.

DIALOGUE AND ACTION PROJECT (DAP)

Catholic Relief Services’ Dialogue and Action Project (DAP) was designed to focus on the high incidence of violations of children’s rights, in particular child marriage. Carried out between July 2013 and June 2016, it was funded by GHR Foundation and engaged four full-time partner staff and a CRS program manager. DAP’s multipronged approach recognized that child marriage is closely connected with illiteracy, child neglect, sexual exploitation and poverty. The project utilized interreligious action approaches, partnering with the Catholic Diocese of Malindi and with Kenya’s Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust (CICC).

CICC members include representatives of Islamic, Christian, Hindu and African traditional faiths. Its diverse members learn from each other; build intra- and interfaith bridges; seek to restore broken political, ethnic and religious relationships; and act together to enhance development. Despite being engaged in ad hoc peace initiatives since the mid-1990s, CICC was only officially registered in 2002. Projects in which CICC partnered with CRS prior to DAP include peace and reconciliation initiatives in Tana River (2002); a joint USIP and CICC interreligious research project (2005-2006); humanitarian assistance, co-funded by OFDA (2008); a joint CRS and USAID people-to-people project (2010-2012); and a peaceful co-existence project (2009-2012).

71 “Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2008-2009.” Calverton, Maryland: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and ICF Macro (2010).

72 Whereas with 6.7 years of completed schooling by girls, Coast Province ranks 6th out of 8 provinces in Kenya, the ranking for educational achievement for boys is 2nd out of 8 provinces, see “Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2008-2009.”

73 UNICEF/Government of Kenya, “The Extent and Effect of Sex Tourism and Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Kenya Coast,” 2006.



CICC and CRS used the lessons learned from these previous experiences while designing and implementing DAP.

DAP was implemented in three phases: DAP I (2010–2012), an interim redesign phase (January to June 2013) and DAP II (2013–2016). The follow-on project, DAP III, is scheduled to continue late into 2019. The participatory design in 2013 built on promising interreligious action approaches and lessons learned from DAP I, intensifying the project's focus on the religiously diverse Malindi area. DAP II aimed a) to deepen successful DAP I interventions such as the school-based Peace Clubs; to foster coordination among school leadership, clerics and the government; and to provide community outreach led by the CICC religious leaders; and b) to complement these interventions with creative new strategies to improve reporting mechanisms on child protection issues (including child marriage) and with more effective engagement with men, community leaders, community role models and out-of-school girls.

DAP I's mid-term review recommended a more active engagement of the country's Kaya Traditionalists to help combat the influence of negative cultural influences on child marriage. Across the coastal region, these traditional religious leaders are custodians of the culture and traditions of the populous Mijikenda community. Their principle objective is to promote values and practices governing ceremonies like child naming, marriage and funerals as well

Anonymous boxes are placed in schools to allow children to report abuse cases.

Philip Laubner/CRS

as songs, cultural festivals, dances, poems and storytelling. Kaya elders are also known to influence the political landscape on the coast.

DAP I's final evaluation also noted that the project did build on the values and activities of specific religions but missed opportunities to profit from the fertile ground for a concerted interreligious approach. In response, DAP II reached out to key stakeholders, including relevant child protection government offices and interreligious leaders and schools, and took an interreligious approach to enhancing child protection and social cohesion in the region.

To help ameliorate local poverty, DAP has operated 52 interreligious Savings and Lending Communities (SILC) groups, whose weekly forums commence with 15-minute, value-based conversations on child rights. In addition, the SILC platform is used to promote peaceful co-existence and the utilization of savings and loans to keep girls in school.

DAP has worked with 529 children in 5 primary school Peace Clubs in values-based, child-driven advocacy of children's rights. To stress interreligious approaches in these target schools, all Peace Club officials include Muslim and Christian "chaplains," who lead reflections in weekly forums. This is aimed at instilling a culture of peace and religious tolerance from an early age. During DAP forums, elders and clerics educate each other on the strengths and gaps regarding child protection in the specific religious traditions. They identify gaps in the religious literature that could be complemented by the constitution and other laws (for example, the holy books do not explicitly prescribe marrying age).

The primary goal of DAP was to reduce incidence of child marriage among vulnerable communities in the coastal region of Kenya, with three strategic objectives aimed at diverse stakeholders:

- **SO1: For boys and girls themselves to advocate against child marriages in their communities.** A Justice and Peace Guide for Peace Club facilitators was prepared for use during weekly Peace Club meetings in schools. Enriched by collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Kenya's Police and Children's Department, it provided orientation for child-driven advocacy for children's rights, including reporting protocols. All target schools installed boxes for anonymous reporting of child abuse. The guide also articulated how children should participate in public forums and outlined methods children can use to nonthreateningly educate adults through songs, dance, poems, drama and debates.
- **SO2: For communities to adopt religious and traditional values and practices that reduce child marriages.** DAP II created interfaith, peer discussion forums for clerics, women, men, youth and public transport providers to deliberate on values that promote children's rights, especially the retention of girls in schools, empowering them to become advocates for children's rights in their communities. SILC group members participated as well.

- **SO3: For key stakeholders to improve the implementation of policies and laws that prevent child marriages.** The stakeholders included government officers from the Ministry of Education, Public Health, Children’s Department, judiciary, Kenya Police Gender and Children’s Desk, and local administration officers, among others. Sensitization forums were provided on existing policies, laws and law enforcement mechanisms. The objective enabled DAP II to continue participating in government Area Advisory Councils and Court Users’ Associations networks of government and civil society bodies that follow-up child abuse cases.

As the CICC is set to assume responsibility for managing DAP activities at the end of three years, an assessment was carried out of its financial and human resource, governance, program management, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Identified gaps were to be followed by trainings and, where necessary, compliance actions and systematic follow-up.

The theory of change behind DAP II was that IF children have the knowledge, skills and support to advocate for their own rights and against child marriage; religious and traditional leaders and influential peers adopt a coordinated, strategic approach to engage parents and community members around traditional and religious teachings and values that support protection of children, especially girls; and key government and other stakeholders are better coordinated and supported to implement child protection policies, THEN the incidence of child marriage in the target areas will be significantly reduced.

The participatory stakeholder forum for the design of DAP II took note of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the African Charter on the rights and welfare of a child; sections of Kenya’s Constitution, Children’s Act and Sexual Exploitation Act; and government regulations on child participation in advocacy-related extracurricular and public activities. The holistic, multipronged effort was designed to uplift moral values, elevate children’s voices in issues that affected them the most, increase household incomes (apart from dowry), and help provide for school fees.

DAP used an overarching interreligious and multisectoral approach engaging clerics and elders from the Muslim, Christian (Catholic, mainstream Protestant, Evangelical and Africa-instituted churches), Hindu (Council of Kenya) and Kaya traditions. A total of 60 clerics and traditional elders united under DAP. It should be noted that while by design CICC’s composition is all male, DAP consciously included women decision makers at the Peace Club, SILC group and networking levels.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

DAP I provided a unique opportunity for religious leaders and institutions to address child marriage. Its trainings and regular meetings aimed to increase the institutional capacity of CICC and the children’s rights’ awareness of individual

clerics and school Peace Clubs members. Key was internalization of Children's Act sections on the right to education and protection from practices such as female genital mutilation, which correlate with school dropout and child marriage rates. Clerics also had opportunities to educate each other on their religious traditions' scriptures and social teachings. The acquired knowledge was utilized in the articulation of issues in public gatherings, reports of abuse and follow-up in courts and police stations. DAP I also reached out to girls who were forced or threatened into marriage, by enrolling them in the Catholic Vocational Training Center, Malindi, where they were provided with new vocational and life skills, as well as social and spiritual support, for two years. Furthermore, it formed a Tana Delta Child Protection Network and enrolled CICC members in Court Users' Associations and an Area Advisory Council.

At time of writing, DAP II has recorded the following outputs and outcomes:

DAP target areas expanded: DAP II included three additional schools and their neighborhood communities, increasing the intervention area from two to five primary schools, and from 296 to 529 children.

Stakeholder engagements enhanced: CRS and partner staff jointly oriented the new target areas' key government stakeholders (local administration, police, public health, children's departments, and education offices) regarding DAP's goals, objectives and strategies. The additional engagement aimed to secure stakeholder buy-in and introduce new members to their roles and responsibilities. This increased the participation of government officials and allowed them to co-facilitate sensitization workshops. It also increased working rapport with the government and opened further opportunities for CICC members to join county government development committees. In new project sites, an orientation was held for CICC leadership, which had been expanded to 60 members. Clerics and traditional elders continued holding monthly discussion forums; following-up on child abuse cases in their respective locations, in collaboration with government structures; and disseminating child protection messages in their communities and sanctuaries or shrines, especially during Sunday and Friday worship gatherings. In addition, clerics and elders made joint child protection statements during public gatherings on national holidays, such as Madaraka, Jamhuri and Mashujaa, and the day of the African Child.

Children's rights abuse cases identified and followed-up: The 60 CICC members and 13 school patrons were trained by the government (from the police, children and education sectors) and the DAP team in child abuse reporting protocols, confidentiality, children's rights paralegal action, lobbying and advocacy skills, and the use of school anonymous boxes and the child helpline 116. Anonymous boxes were installed in all five target schools, enabling *46 cases to be reported by children*. CRS and DAP, with the support of clerics and traditional elders, parents and local administration, identified 13 out-of-school girls (all young mothers and at high risk of child marriage), six of whom



were readmitted to school. DAP lobbied for more girls to be helped to return to school and for alternative training or support for those who could not.

SILC operations and interreligious child protection values innovatively integrated: SILC interreligious groups increased from 14 to 52. CRS conducted two refresher trainings (one on SILC concepts and another on entrepreneurship) with seven partner staff and three SILC Private Service Providers (PSPs). CRS integrated teaching on child protection and interreligious social cohesion into SILC training in 2016. The interreligious content was provided by Muslim, Christian and Traditionalist clerics and elders. Religious values were included in the 15-minute SILC talking sessions. It should be noted that nine SILC group members were publicly honored as role models for child protection, advocacy and peaceful co-existence, and as children's rights ambassadors.

Partner capacity strengthened: CRS strengthened the institutional capacity of its implementing partners in preparation for project ownership transition in year three. CRS conducted 26 activities aimed at strengthening partner operations, with a focus on planning, management, finances, and monitoring and evaluation.

Members of an interreligious Savings and Lending Community (SILC) group in Watamu begin their meetings with prayer and discussions that encourage interfaith dialogue. Like other SILC groups in the DAP project, they dedicate time to learn about child protection and apply some of their funds to school fees, especially for girls. *Philip Laubner/CRS*

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES AND SPILLOVER EFFECTS

DAP's expansion from 12 to 60 district and local committees necessitated additional intra- and interreligious capacity strengthening of participating organizations and officials. DAP also encountered a dilemma around how to balance a demand for income generation activities (IGAs) with the protection of out-of-school girls against child labor abuses. As noted, DAP identified 13 girls who had dropped out of school due to early pregnancies and assisted six of them to be readmitted. However, a dilemma emerged involving girls who could not enroll in school because they had no one with whom to leave their young ones. Aiming to ease livelihood burdens on their families, the girls requested DAP assistance for small start-up businesses, but Kenya's Children's Act⁷⁴ prohibits any work that interferes with children's education. Despite the potential of income generating activities to reduce vulnerability to sexual exploitation and child marriage, business activity could be viewed as a barrier to securing education and self-actualization. DAP persuaded some parents and guardians to babysit while their daughters went to school. For girls older than 16 years, the project used the Kenya Employment Act, which allows children of at least 16 years of age to take part in industrial apprenticeship⁷⁵ undertakings, encouraging the government to enroll them in village polytechnic programs where they could attend lessons with their babies/toddlers. DAP further clarified this undertaking to the girls, parents and stakeholders to avoid perceptions that children's rights were being violated.

KEY FACTORS

Increasing the number of clerics from 12 to 60 as per CICC policies resulted in challenges. Increasing the numbers of interreligious leaders presented potential for improved value-based children's rights advocacy; however, their limited intra- and interreligious capacities impacted project operations. The 48 newcomers were not like-minded in interreligious dialogue and their level of religious tolerance was low compared to their 12 peers. In order for the clerics to adequately take up children's rights advocacy in an area known for interreligious tensions and terrorist attacks, DAP integrated peer counselling for the newcomers during monthly meetings and received support from CRS' Capacity for Interreligious Community Action (CIRCA) forums.

DAP's multipronged and multistakeholder design contributed significantly to its positive results. The combination of economic empowerment, child-driven advocacy, the engagement of interreligious clerics and elders, and the active engagement of key stakeholders (especially government officials) allowed for considerable achievements. Joint interventions by interfaith clerics and elders in public forums reduced interethnic and religious tensions. Child-driven advocacy built children's confidence and assertiveness over issues affecting

74 Children's Act 2001, No. 8 section 10.

75 Employment Act 2007, section 58 and 59.

them, while influencing adults through songs, dance, drama and poems. SILC groups provided peer counseling opportunities and child abuse reporting mechanisms, while helping improve livelihoods. There was notable collaboration with public officials.

SHORTCOMINGS AND THEIR PERCEIVED CAUSES

One weakness of DAP was the absence of women in key decision-making roles. Patriarchy is strong on the Kenyan coast. Moreover, the CICC is a purely male body, which has avoided including female clerics, in part to be sensitive to its members who do not ordain women. CICC includes women in administrative and technical roles, and women play key roles in community activities.

School-based activities, including Peace Clubs, were hampered by the 2014-15 nationwide teachers' strikes over remuneration. School terms were shortened by the strikes, leading schools to prioritize the mainstream curriculum over extracurricular activities. This also delayed the installation of the boxes for anonymous child abuse reporting by pupils.

In 2014 and 2015, growing insecurity—especially the terrorist attacks in Lamu and Tana Delta—hindered quality monitoring and follow-ups. The area became virtually inaccessible as the government declared curfews that lasted close to six months, and CRS imposed travel restrictions. During the curfew period staff had to rely on electronic reports from the field.

Finally, the timeframe was a limiting factor. As noted in the 2015 mid-term evaluation, the communities indicated that the project period appeared to be too short for ensuring meaningful impact.

LESSONS LEARNED

Building capacity for interreligious action is crucial: It is critical to strategically plan for interreligious capacity building for new interreligious action project participants, to enable quality engagement and representation.

Special attention should be given to reconciling children's protection laws and approaches with livelihood needs: It is important to anticipate and take into account the full range of children's rights and child labor laws and norms when seeking to engage out-of-school children in extracurricular activities,



Kaya traditionalists—members of CICC—open a community meeting with prayer. Meetings included sensitization on children's rights, encouraging communities to abandon any cultural practice that contravenes children's rights, especially the practice of child marriage. *Philip Laubner/CRS*

in order to explain to direct beneficiaries that protection from child labor supersedes income generation needs.

As a result of the lessons learned and implemented during the project, DAP ensured that CICC's new elders and clerical recruits were well equipped through training and peer counseling prior to being given interreligious assignments. Furthermore, CRS and CICC started lobbying the county governments to support the girls' enrolment in occupational village polytechnic schools near their homes.

The project's most significant overall contribution to CRS' justice and peacebuilding work has been its modeling of effective cross-sector integration. Protection, health, education, microfinance, gender and peacebuilding foci were interwoven together with interreligious and government engagement. In addition to its effects on outputs and outcomes, the multipronged approach strengthened partner structures and capacities and contributed to sustainability.

SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES

DAP benefitted from CRS' Peacebuilding, Governance and Gender (PBGG) core competency staff and from CIRCA, with regard to project integration and conflict sensitivity. There was also synergy with the Catholic Diocese of Malindi's Pope Francis Rescue Home (PFH), supported through CRS. PFH complemented DAP by vetting rescue cases reported through school anonymous boxes. PFH also chose CICC as an avenue for the reintegration of rescued children back into the community, because of its religious diversity and safe spaces for counseling, restoration and reintegration.

DAP worked with government officials from departments of education, children's rights, public health, police, the judiciary and local administration. It combined advocacy work with collaboration. DAP advocated for speedier prosecution of the reported cases and for children's rights policies through its membership in the government's Court Users' Association and Area Advisory Committees. DAP also took advantage of quality government trainings on child abuse reporting protocols, policies, confidentiality and guidelines on child participation in extracurricular activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Intra- and interreligious capacity should be strengthened prior to interreligious engagements, in order to ensure optimum impacts and forestall unintended effects (do no harm).** There is a dire need to document and disseminate lessons learned. Cross-learning between CRS country programs, such as Kenya and the Philippines (which has used development initiatives as entry points for interreligious action and has successfully fostered the participation of women), could enhance effective programming. A community of practice for country



programs utilizing interreligious action for social cohesion could yield great learning.

- **Additional capacity building support in holistic, integrated programming should be provided.** There is a need for enhanced and more emphatic inclusion of peacebuilding, governance and gender—as well as interreligious action—in the design of strategic agricultural livelihood, health and humanitarian response initiatives. Clear agency direction and capacity would benefit those we serve and with whom we work.

Sixty members of the CICC meet for a workshop on confronting child abuse and championing child protection activities in Malindi.

Philip Laubner/CRS



Mindanao: Binding, Bonding and Bridging

MYLA LEGURO AND THE A3B PROJECT TEAM

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Land conflicts are among the primary causes of violence in Mindanao, both at the community level and between armed groups. Questions of ancestral domain and tenure are important not only for securing individual justice, but for the success of the larger peace process between the government and Muslim Moro rebels fighting for an autonomous state on the island.

Over the last century, various land policies have favored property rights for settlers and commercial interests in Mindanao, at the expense of the rights of native inhabitants. Also, there is acute lack of adequate legal mechanisms to resolve disputes. Without clear resolution, competing claims over land among Muslims, Christians and indigenous peoples have caused social upheaval and violence (both small- and large-scale), worsening social relations and increasing fear and prejudice.

Land conflicts often represent a collision between modern property laws and customary laws on land ownership and tenure. Resolving land conflicts in a

judicial setting, where one side may win and another lose, can worsen tensions and erode tenuous social cohesion. Contradictory property laws, inconsistent legal interpretations and poor documentation of land titles have added to the confusion, making it extremely difficult to resolve competing claims. The unequal access to and protection of property rights (land access, use and ownership) has also been aggravated by the multiplicity of government agencies charged with land tenure administration. Different agency regulatory systems have created conflicting and overlapping land tenure frameworks, resulting in numerous land-related disputes. Conflicts have become widespread, especially in communities where different identity groups live and conflicting government laws and tenurial instruments overlap.

It should be noted that community level dispute resolution, using sanctioned conflict-resolution structures mandated by the government, can offer alternative mechanisms for addressing the intertwined land, social and conflict issues. These local structures, composed of 10 to 20 local political and social leaders, exist at the “barangay”, “village” level.

Mindanao’s land conflicts should not, however, be understood only as a dynamic between major identity groups. They involve individuals, families, clans, groups, communities and even private companies. Many are related to socioeconomic power imbalances between conflicting parties, with conflicts occurring in both symmetrical and asymmetrical contexts. Land conflict types include competing or overlapping land claims, boundary disputes, encroachment on ancestral lands, questionable sales, mortgaging, forced eviction and land grabbing.⁷⁶

APPLYING BINDING, BONDING AND BRIDGING TO LAND CONFLICT (A3B)

CRS/Philippines implemented the Applying Binding, Bonding and Bridging to Land Conflict in Mindanao (A3B) project from April 2012 to September 2015. Four CRS staff worked together with 29 staff from five local partner organizations on activities in 20 barangays across four municipalities in Central Mindanao. The project was funded by USAID/CMM, with a cost share contribution provided by CRS.

Recognizing these complex conflict dynamics, the A3B project employed a three-step approach for reconciliation, known as the 3Bs: Binding, Bonding and Bridging. With its partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs), CRS applied the approach in four municipalities in Central Mindanao with Muslim, Christian and indigenous peoples’ groups. Throughout the process, traditional and religious leaders (TRLs) acted as community peace facilitators. NGO partners assisted official conflict-resolution structures, the “Lupong Tagapamayapa” (LTs) “village pacification committees,” and TRLs to facilitate

76 A3B, “Project Baseline Report,” 2012.

community level dialogue and mediations, leading to the eventual peaceful resolution of land conflicts. A3B also connected stakeholders at the barangay level with mayors and municipal-level decision makers, in order to ensure higher-level support for the solutions agreed upon through bridging activities. In this way, peace was cultivated at the individual, community and municipal levels, forming the structures and systems necessary to support viable alternatives to violence.

The project sought to achieve one specific objective:

- **SO1: Diverse groups in Central Mindanao collaboratively resolve land-related conflict.** Three key results were pursued to support this objective: traditional and religious leaders initiate intragroup and intergroup dialogue processes on land-related conflicts in target communities; diverse groups in land disputes collaborate to resolve their conflicts; and government stakeholders support local decision making to resolve land disputes. Ultimately, the overall goal was to contribute to a reduction in violence related to land conflicts in Central Mindanao.

The underlying theory of change for this project was articulated as follows: IF opposing identity groups transform their own intragroup relations based on the values of tolerance and justice, THEN they will be more willing and able to cooperate with opposing identity groups to generate and implement mutually agreed upon action plans to resolve land conflict nonviolently.

CRS believes that reconciliation efforts must first address intragroup divisions by generating safe spaces for binding (trauma healing and self-transformation) and bonding within the group. Greater ingroup cohesion will promote an enabling environment for bridging between separate identity groups through careful facilitation by well-respected third parties. Within the context of Mindanao, traditional religious leaders have often acted as catalysts to promote peaceful means for resolving conflicts.

The process of bringing identity groups to work together to resolve land conflict nonviolently is guided by the three-step reconciliation approach mentioned above: binding, bonding and bridging. Entry at the community level is facilitated through binding, helping individuals to heal trauma and prejudice,



Datu Mailan Andas, a tribal leader involved in the project, leads an indigenous ritual to symbolize unity, peace and reconciliation, after a community dialogue addressing a land conflict between an indigenous clan and a public school. *Pasacaday Manobo Association (PAMAAS) project staff*



Traditional and religious leaders (TRLs) of Barangay Basak reflect on the results of their “identity and perception” exercise during the Understanding the Self workshop for community leaders. *A3B project team*

and prepare for reconciliation with others in their own group. TRLs then lead bonding efforts in their respective identity groups, building ingroup social capital,⁷⁷ arriving at a consensus on ways to address the conflict by bridging with the “other.”

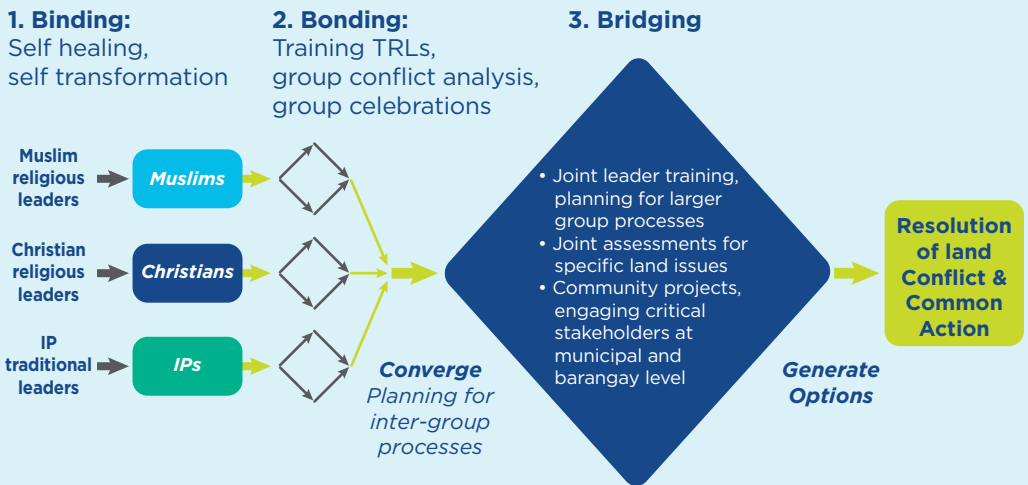
Binding activities gave individuals the space for self-transformation and sometimes involved trauma healing.

Activities included understanding-the-self workshops, peace and dialogue sessions, and meetings to prepare individuals involved in land conflicts to go into dialogue and conflict resolution. Understanding-the-self workshops were three-day sessions for key TRLs in the target areas, where they could explore their own traumas, prejudices and biases, and how these affect their relationships. The workshops also focused on increasing the TRLs’ understanding of their unique role as peacebuilders in their communities. The peace and dialogue sessions facilitated appreciation and understanding of religious and spiritual values within Islam, Christianity and the indigenous faiths, and their connection to efforts at resolving local conflicts. TRLs used learnings from these workshops to help prepare individuals involved in land conflicts to move into dialogue and conflict resolution.

77 Paffenholz proposes a comprehensive analytical framework which outlines 7 functions of civil society in peacebuilding. Ingroup socialization is undertaken to build ingroup social capital for peace, see Thania Paffenholz, *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 70-71.

Bonding activities helped strengthen relations within the respective identity groups. The individual healing and improvements in intragroup relations provided the foundation for dialogue and collaboration with other identity groups as part of the third step. TRLs conducted peace- and conflict-mapping sessions, land conflict analysis and conflict resolution planning as part of the bonding efforts.

Bridging developed trust between identity groups and aided the resolution of land conflicts (intergroup activities). Activities included interfaith celebrations, implementing community-based reconciliation projects, joint legal literacy trainings, and dialogues between conflicting parties. Intergroup dialogue was aimed at concrete land issues, undertaken through joint problem analysis using participatory conflict analysis techniques. Dialogue aimed at working toward negotiated resolution of land conflicts. The outcome was envisioned as a list of workable and mutually agreed upon options, endorsed by the conflicting groups and supported by government stakeholders at the municipal level.



RESULTS AND IMPACTS

In the communities, 35 land conflict cases were resolved by TRLs and LT committees: The cases involved competing claims (11), mortgage conflict (10), farm boundary disputes (10), the encroachment of private companies on ancestral domain areas (2), watershed management (1), and a political boundary dispute (1). The end-of-project evaluation revealed that as a result of the A3B project, the process of how to address land conflicts was clarified and strengthened, and community participants had a better understanding of their rights and the legal processes. Participants also stated that it

increased access to justice for vulnerable groups because taking land-related cases to court was often prohibitively expensive. Participant observations were consistent with the findings of an internal assessment process which employed the Most Significant Change approach. Of the 80 most significant change stories, 36 (45 percent) documented “change in conflict resolution process” in communities, which demonstrates that the A3B project had a significant impact on the structural level.

In total, 143 traditional and religious leaders were mobilized as community peace facilitators for project activities, and they established four municipal interfaith networks: TRLs were identified as credible and influential leaders in their communities, who could serve as entry points and connectors. They facilitated reconciliation, to help conflicting parties in the resolution process, and also acted as dialogue facilitators. In some cases, they used their credibility to help balance power between and among parties and, more importantly, served as active peacebuilders in their communities. The interfaith network of TRLs strengthened cohesion between different identity groups. The network also provided a platform for discussing and resolving land-related issues at the community level. Through the leadership structure of the interfaith network, TRLs were able to bring up land-related issues for discussion and resolution by concerned agencies through coordination with the established Municipal Interagency Working Group (MIWG).

Regarding the scope of the project, 383 binding, bonding and bridging activities were completed with 6,455 persons (3,885 male and 2,620 female): The participants included TRLs, Lupong Tagapamayapa members, local government officials, women, young people and representatives of government agencies. Findings from the internal assessment and external evaluation confirmed that the project was able to contribute to short-term and medium-term impacts in A3B communities. Project outcomes were identified through four domains of change (personal, relational, institutional and broader community).⁷⁸ At the personal level the project was effective in shifting participant attitudes, especially toward increased self-awareness, willingness to be nonjudgmental and nonbiased, increased mutual tolerance, and respect and trust of others, including municipal government. Stakeholders indicated that the most observed behavioral changes were willingness to communicate and increased contact across identity lines.

The A3B project also improved relationships between identity groups, between conflicting parties, between partners and communities, between partners and government agencies, between community and government agencies, and between government agencies. The 3Bs process harnessed both horizontal (people-to-people) and vertical (people-to-state) relationship-building. Project

⁷⁸ These domains of changes were identified as key aspects of peacebuilding initiatives based on the four dimensions of conflict transformation (personal, relational, structural and cultural), articulated by J. P. Lederach, a leading scholar in the field.



stakeholders strengthened relationships between conflicting parties, between identity groups, and within identity groups at the horizontal level. At the vertical level, the project was able to contribute to strengthening relationships between community and government units (barangay and municipal levels) and even between government agencies. Changes on the vertical axis involved increased engagement of community leaders and residents with government actors.

Indigenous and Christian TRLs participate during the closing of the Understanding the Self workshop in Senator Ninoy Aquino municipality. *Oblates Missionary Foundation-IP Ministry (OMF-IPM) project staff*

In total, 18 community-based reconciliation projects were completed to foster cooperation among identity groups and address specific local needs:

The projects included improvement of community facilities and structures (6), improvement of pedestrian bridges (2), community lighting (to enhance security), improvement of health facilities (4), improvement of water access and facilities (4), and improvement of community sanitation and hygiene (1). TRLs and LTs shared that these community projects contributed to improving relationships between community members and addressed important community needs—especially for women and children. In total, 21,409 individuals benefited from these projects.

Looking at training participants, 293 Lupong Tagapamayapa members from 20 barangays completed peacebuilding, conflict resolution and mediation trainings, and supported the strengthening of the mandated local conflict

resolution structures in the barangays: The external evaluation concluded that A3B was indeed instrumental in strengthening capacity to resolve conflicts in their communities. As a result, the project has enhanced the local conflict resolution processes and helped resolve land conflicts.

Partner organizations established four Municipal Interagency Working Groups, involving 34 municipal agencies and 14 provincial level government offices, to sustain policy support for local land conflict resolution; the MIWGs adopted 16 land policies and proposals: One example is the land policy proposal passed by members of the MIWG in Polomolok, which outlined the steps in issuing certifications of land claims at the village level, as a way to streamline resolution and reduce competing claims. Another was a municipal ordinance that will prohibit the selling and mortgaging of Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) rights held by indigenous peoples to outsiders, thereby enhancing the land security of indigenous people.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES AND SPILLOVER EFFECTS

TRLs trained by the project applied their skills in conflict resolution to nonpriority and non-land-related conflicts, resulting in the successful resolution of 17 nonpriority land cases, in addition to 18 priority land cases. TRLs and LTs from all municipalities indicated that they have used the 3Bs approach to address family conflicts, clan feuds and some political conflicts between community leaders. Through the MIWG structures led by the local mayors, the project was also officially expanded to include additional barangays in the four target municipalities.

Community-based reconciliation projects encouraged cooperation among identity groups and also contributed to local development initiatives, benefitting mostly women and children. During the Most Significant Change sharing sessions, many women reported that the solidarity and unity developed among members of different identity groups led to a joint identification of pressing issues. For example, improved community health facilities contributed to expanded services for vulnerable women and children. The setup of a water system freed up more time for women to engage in farming and other livelihood activities. Some development projects created spaces for women and women's organizations to increase participation in community activities.

The project not only facilitated land conflict resolution but also strengthened local governance. Increased confidence and leadership capacity, especially among indigenous peoples and Muslims, have empowered residents to claim their rights and advocate for issues of concern with the barangay and municipal governments. With indigenous leaders taking a more active role, barangay and municipal government units have expanded their representation in various local governance mechanisms such as peace and order committees and barangay councils. The 3Bs activities helped build trust and improve relationships



between community and government agencies. Barangay and municipal governments are more responsive and proactive through improved budget allocation and reshaping of policies and services to address the needs of indigenous communities. Bridging activities helped improve communication and relations between different government agencies, enhancing efficiencies and effectiveness.

Indigenous and Christian TRLs participate during the closing of the Culture of Peace workshop in Senator Ninoy Aquino municipality. *Oblates Missionary Foundation-IP Ministry (OMF-IPM) project staff*

KEY FACTORS

A key factor that supported effective project implementation was engaging local partner organizations that are trusted, credible and have long-standing presence in the community as co-managers and implementers. The local partners have a good understanding of the communities and their historical, cultural, religious, social and political contexts, and are able to adjust and adapt the approach. The local knowledge and credibility of partners also facilitated entry into the communities, despite the sensitivity of land conflict issues.

Another key factor was the clarity of the 3Bs approach; TRLs and LTs could easily adapt and integrate the simple tools and frameworks into their conflict resolution efforts. CRS and local partner organizations held regular learning reflections with community leaders to improve their understanding and practice of the 3Bs tools.

Finally, there was careful monitoring and adaptability. CRS and local partners were attentive to the changing needs and context of the project, and could introduce new activities as well as altering the timeline and sequence of activities, based on a continuous needs analysis. Regular monitoring and discussions with TRLs, Barangay Local Government Units (BLGUs) and NGO staff members helped identify challenges and jointly explore possible solutions. It enabled the project to address pressing community needs and create a sense of ownership by community members and local leaders.

SHORTCOMINGS AND THEIR PERCEIVED CAUSES

The timeframe was a major limitation. Three years was sufficient for undertaking the 3Bs process at the community level, focusing on establishing and strengthening systems and processes for land conflict resolution. However, ideally the project should have been extended for another two years, to better support the sustainability of the municipal level structures to continue working on land policy reforms and strengthening land governance mechanisms and processes.

While the project advocated for the inclusion of women in the TRL network and LT structures, the participation of women leaders was weak due to the male-dominated formal and informal governance and conflict resolution structures. In hindsight, the project could have mobilized support of the wives of the TRLs and other key women leaders. Also, focused capacity building processes to increase leadership capacity among women would have been helpful.

The engagement of young people could have been improved. Partners wanted to incorporate more young people within the project to sustain a handover of peacebuilding responsibilities from the community elders and leaders to the younger generation. The project could have included young community leaders in trainings and workshops to support the building of peace skills beyond the group of elders.

LESSONS LEARNED

The 3Bs approach requires adequate numbers of dedicated staff for community level engagements: The 3Bs approach is process intensive, requiring many hours of rigorous hands-on work with partner organizations and community peace facilitators. It is important for 3Bs projects to have sufficient staffing at CRS and partner organization levels, in order to provide close and regular support at the community level.

The specifics of the approach should be adapted for each case by undertaking a thorough examination and re-evaluation of the conflict in the local context: For example, direct application of the approach was sufficient to drive the process forward in cases of symmetrical conflicts. On the other hand, in asymmetrical land conflicts (e.g., community versus a private

company), partner organizations had to do additional binding and bonding activities to sufficiently prepare—and empower—marginalized individuals and groups before engaging in relevant bridging efforts.

Local communities should be informed and engaged through a carefully designed and consistent process when working in complex conflict situations such as land conflicts:

Land conflicts are complex, intractable and divisive. Local NGOs were very cautious about introducing the goals of the project to the communities. Peace- and conflict-mapping sessions were carefully planned and facilitated to limit divisive tensions. TRLs were prepared to be positive contributors in creating safe spaces for difficult discussions. Local NGOs learned the importance of establishing safe spaces for communities to discuss land issues. Recognizing the important role of TRLs in catalyzing land conflict resolution, local NGOs spent significant time strategically mapping TRLs to identify a core group in each barangay and municipality. However, local partners realized that they needed to constantly analyze the power, position and credibility of TRLs, in order to understand their interests and influence. As embedded actors in the community, some of the TRLs also held political positions, had connections to conflicting groups and had their own interests in land issues.

Building strong relationships with key champions is an important enabling factor: CRS and local partners learned that to effectively engage government actors and structures it was important to build relationships with key champions within the government structures, to empower community leaders to engage with government, and to demonstrate the success of the 3Bs approach at the lower, community level.

SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES

Learning events, such as CRS' annual Summer Institute of Peacebuilding (SIP), often provide inspiration and practical ideas for programming. The A3B approach was informed and inspired by the 2011 SIP, and enhanced by the local CRS team by building on its long experience in grassroots peacebuilding and interreligious dialogue.



A Christian and an indigenous person shake hands to culminate resolution of their land conflict. TRL facilitators and village officials witness the ceremony. *OMF-IPM project staff*

The engagement of CRS headquarters in project design and implementation can provide significant technical support for innovations in peacebuilding approaches and programming initiated at the country program level. Technical advisors also facilitated the sharing of project design, tools and processes with other country programs.

Approaches used in one project can help improve, refine or scale up other interventions within the country program, as occurred with the second peace governance project in Mindanao. Project outcomes indicate that the 3Bs approach can be utilized to strengthen integration between peacebuilding and governance as well as enhancing vertical and horizontal social cohesion.

Effective peacebuilding projects such as A3B and publications that document their work tend to generate strong interest with key donors and peers. USAID is specifically interested in learning effective and practical approaches to integrate social cohesion efforts in their development programs, and recently granted CRS another round of funding for implementing the 3Bs approach in addressing broader conflict issues in Mindanao. The World Bank has also engaged the project team, local partner organization and community leaders to study the 3Bs approach in addressing land conflict issues in communities affected by the Moro conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **CRS should support thematic learning events with country program staff engaged in peacebuilding to help generate practical ideas for programming.** At the same time, CRS should also provide further technical and financial (start-up) resources for promising innovations, project designs and approaches that emerge from such events. Start-up support could be used for both implementing these innovations and documenting learning.
- **Reflective learning processes with peacebuilding organizations should be scaled up and supported by CRS.** The process can involve a broad spectrum of organizations and agencies that work in the conflict transformation field in review and reflection on promising projects and initiatives. This effort would greatly help distill valuable lessons to be applied across the sector. Specifically for the A3B case, a global conference on interreligious action and social cohesion would provide a platform to showcase the approach and explore possible synergies with major peacebuilding and donor partners.
- **CRS and local peacebuilding partners should focus on how current interreligious action and social cohesion efforts can be harnessed to support work on structural or institutional change.** It would help address broader justice issues, above and beyond the level of personal and relational transformation.



Upper Egypt: Action for Interreligious Tolerance

ROGER FAHMY AND MALAKA REFAI

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Egypt's Muslim and Christian communities have coexisted for centuries. Periods of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and cooperation have been interspersed with periods of tension and hostility. While the past 20 years were marked by relative calm, punctuated by sporadic tensions and violence, Egypt's political upheaval in 2011 led to deteriorated relations and increased distrust among communities. In 2013 alone, there were more than 200 documented incidents of sectarian violence throughout Egypt.⁷⁹ Most of these incidents occurred between Egypt's majority Sunni Muslims and Coptic Christians (approximately 7% of the total population).⁸⁰ The increase in sectarian conflict presents a constant and on-going barrier to coexistence.

According to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, the most frequent interreligious violent attacks occur in Upper Egypt, including the governorates

79 <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

80 <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/11/14/violence-against-copts-in-egypt/gtsf>.

of Minya, Assiut, Sohag, Gena and Luxor. In August 2013, amid political turmoil, more than 40 churches as well as dozens of schools, orphanages and other Christian-affiliated facilities were attacked in the cities of Beni Sueif and Minya. In late 2013, a deadly sectarian incident took place in Naga Hassan, a village 10 km west of Luxor. In this instance the killing of a Muslim man resulted in the burning and looting of approximately 110 Christian-owned homes by mobs of villagers.⁸¹ These and other attacks have often been initiated by young men from within the communities.

In addition to interreligious violence, individual disputes—even between members of the same religious group—are common in Upper Egypt. When disputes are between individuals of the same religious group, they dissipate more rapidly and peacefully, largely due to tribal and familial loyalties being used as conflict management mechanisms. Religious leaders are also more likely to intervene and de-escalate conflicts within their own faith communities. When individual disputes take place between persons of different religious groups, they are more likely to escalate into violence as both groups often perceive the other as overtly hostile. In these conflicts, people tend to unite along religious lines rather than based on facts, fueling tensions and making violence more likely.

Recent CRS assessments and project reports confirmed a high prevalence of societal isolation throughout Upper Egypt. Even though individual families of different religious backgrounds may live in the same building, very few interactions occur. Unlike the Cairo area, where persons naturally interact through shared service providers, Upper Egypt lacks common public spaces. Reports and assessments confirm that public spaces in Upper Egypt, which were initially created to be for the village at large, either have a negative reputation or have been socially established as places that are off limits for females and Christians. As a result, Christians in Upper Egypt structure all segments of their lives—including social and educational activities—around their church. As a result of this societal isolation, Muslims and Christians lack the shared spaces where interaction can take place; they do not address conflicts together; and discrimination and negative rhetoric emerge and grow due to ignorance and isolation from each another. This discrimination has brought a spike in violence since the 2013 political upheavals, as both Christians and their places of worship have become targets of increased violence and destruction.

TOLERANT ATTITUDES AND LEADERSHIP FOR ACTION (TA'ALA)

From September 2013 to September 2015, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) implemented the TA'ALA project in the three Upper Egyptian governorates of Assiut, Sohag and Luxor.⁸² Over the two years, the project reached a total

81 http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt0814web_0.pdf.

82 The TA'ALA project was funded by the USG/DOS Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) and CRS' private funds.

of 20 villages. The CRS team was composed of four full-time staff. In each governorate, the team worked together with two partner organizations, the local Coptic Catholic Diocese and a local organization led by Muslims, six partners in total. Each partner provided one project coordinator and one finance officer, a mix of full-time and part-time staff.

TA'ALA provided an opportunity for leaders and young people to develop relationships with one another and to spread positive messages of interreligious tolerance in their communities. TA'ALA created a unique space for Muslims and Christians to gather and learn together. The learning consisted of ten monthly training sessions for religious and community leaders on skills related to communication, conflict resolution and mediation, in addition to regular informal meetings. Young people also came together for seven sessions of trainings on similar topics, and jointly implemented cultural events and community initiatives in their villages.

Leaders were chosen for the trainings based on three criteria: their potential influence on improving the image of the religious other; their influence on different societal tiers; and their ability to model the healing of interreligious relationships. The first criterion was met by choosing to work with partner organizations that enjoyed a positive reputation both within and outside their religious community. The second was addressed by working with partners to engage natural leaders, school teachers and administrators as well as known heads of families who could reach out to various audiences within the community. The third criterion was addressed by placing all (Christian, Muslim and community) leaders in the same shared space. The relationships built during the trainings continued outside the shared space and demonstrated to the larger community that leaders who formerly were suspicious of or isolated from other groups now were better able to perform their responsibilities in relationship with the “other.”

The leaders chosen were well known and respected, and had a positive reputation in their villages. Therefore, they had the unique ability to take actions outside of the local social norms without attracting negative attention. As a result, when these leaders started to work together to resolve conflicts, the communities began to ask questions in a positive manner. This allowed the leaders to spread the message of the benefits of interreligious cooperation and tolerance to the larger community. Later in the implementation, these leaders were the ones who nominated youth from their villages to join the project.

The overarching goal of TA'ALA was for Egyptian communities to achieve increased interreligious tolerance, with the following strategic objectives:

- **SO1: Religious and clan leaders in at-risk communities in Upper Egypt actively collaborate to reduce interreligious conflict.** Through TA'ALA, key leaders gained skills in monitoring and responding to interreligious conflicts before they escalate. They were trained in conflict analysis, conflict resolution and mediation.

- **SO2: Muslims and Christians in at-risk communities in Upper Egypt actively collaborate in community action.** TA'ALA supported young people to become examples of healing relationships in their communities. Together, they attended trainings and learned how to plan and implement cultural activities and participatory village action plans.

The project's theory of change was that IF influential Muslim and Christian leaders actively collaborate to resolve conflict and promote greater tolerance, and IF youth in the communities take action across religious lines, THEN communities will experience reduced interreligious tension and conflict, BECAUSE the moderate majority will have the relationships, skills and leadership assistance to act nonviolently with regard to religious differences.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

Resolving interreligious conflicts: Participating Muslim and Christian religious and clan leaders established mechanisms to monitor and resolve interreligious conflicts, reporting 38 interventions by the close of the project. In these interventions leaders stepped in to address conflict—be it interreligious, domestic or intrareligious—in order to ensure violence did not occur. The interventions were self-reported by leaders to the project partners, with a third party confirming the reports. The indicator employed did not allow the disaggregation of interventions by type, since only the interreligious interventions were tracked.

Promoting interreligious tolerance: Leaders created 41 statements to promote tolerance in their communities. The majority were crafted in the final quarter of the project. In one case in Sohag, in response to tensions between Muslim and Christian students, the school principal began using these statements in front of the entire school (80 teachers and around 1,000 students) for the morning announcement. The aim was to spread positive attitudes toward the religious “other.”

Cultivating Muslim and Christian youth cooperation in the implementation of community action plans: In total, 26 community action initiatives were carried out. For example, in health awareness campaigns that targeted diseases and health conditions in the villages, young people worked with doctors and pharmacists in order to properly diagnose those who could not afford to visit a doctor; raise awareness about diseases like diabetes, hepatitis C and hypertension; share preventative methods; and link village members with available government support. Other initiatives were directly related to peacebuilding, such as activities and sporting events engaging children from both faiths, along with home visits to promote inclusive and peace-fostering communication.

Young people spreading messages of interreligious cooperation to their peers: Staff and partner organization observations, shared during meetings



and monitoring visits, indicated that young people further disseminated the positive messages they learned in the trainings and collaborations with their peers. For example, after a training on identity and diversity, male youth shared the experience with their friends not involved in the project at a café. Other young people also reported that their newly developed relationships with youth from the other faith drew the attention of villagers, creating opportunities for them to speak about the project with others.

Strengthening capacity among TA'ALA project partners to implement interfaith peacebuilding projects: All six project partners worked directly on peacebuilding for the first time under this project. All three Coptic Catholic Dioceses had never participated in interreligious collaboration within the framework of partnerships with Muslim or secular organizations. At the end of the project, the CRS team observed that four of the six partners were ready to implement similar projects autonomously.

TA'ALA religious leaders Father Rueis, left, and Sheikh Moustafa work together to engage the faithful in interreligious dialogue in the village of Al Odayssat in Upper Egypt. *Nikki Gamer/CRS*

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES AND SPILLOVER EFFECTS

Relationship-building was a central part of the intervention strategy and was best achieved by simply providing space for relationships between Muslims and Christian participants to flourish. The leaders and young people involved in retreats appreciated the opportunity to spend several days together, because this was a valuable component not developed through training sessions, informal

meetings or field visits. For some participants, this relationship-building was equally—if not more—important than the content of the training materials.

In some instances, such as in villages in Luxor and Sohag, beneficiaries opened their private space, including the “mandara”, or “reception areas” in their homes, to those they met through TA’ALA. Some of the leaders in Sohag were able to provide the community development organizations’ offices as a space for meetings.

The project’s partnership model—involving the selection of a development organization part of the Coptic Catholic Dioceses, and then working with the dioceses to identify a local organization as a Muslim partner—also opened up new opportunities for collaboration. In Luxor, the community based organization Nour El Islam had been regarded by its Orthodox neighbor, the St. Marc Coptic Association, as a hard line conservative organization. But as soon as the latter discovered that Nour El Islam was partnering with Coptic Catholics in the TA’ALA project, they decided to explore collaboration options and recently secured a joint fund of one million Egyptian Pounds (approximately \$128,000) from a major local donor for a clean-up project in a local Luxor neighborhood. According to Haj S.H., managing director of Nour El Islam, this type of joint effort was unimaginable before TA’ALA.

KEY FACTORS

Important factors that enhanced project outcomes were the soliciting of suggestions through regular feedback and reflection events with partners, and being both responsive and flexible in adjusting the implementation plan. The CRS team regularly conducted critical reflection sessions with partner teams to check if the targets were being met; if the work was being done effectively; and if the data collected were accurate and useful. The project followed partner recommendations many times on where, when and how activities could best be delivered. For example, when advised that the leaders were restless due to the length of the trainings in Sohag, the team followed the partner recommendation to combine the remaining trainings in a training camp, which clearly improved relationship-building among the leaders themselves.

Another important contribution to the project were the regular visits to all three governorates to monitor the project and meet with partners. These regular interactions, along with the trainings for leaders and youth, allowed project partners to internalize the values of interreligious tolerance and cooperation.

SHORTCOMINGS AND THEIR PERCEIVED CAUSES

The YouTube component did not work as planned. The YouTube channel was meant to be an innovative way to share the project with the community, with youth participants recording and sharing messages and the work they were doing. But uploads were minimal and, even when delivered, the content did not meet the objective of the YouTube channel. It appears that there were many

false assumptions on the role of social media in Upper Egypt. Social media was initially included based on the assumption that young people would be eager to use it to spread the messages of peace to their peers. However, one lesson learned was that the project participants in Upper Egypt were less engaged in using social media.

The use of street films also proved impractical. Due to security concerns, leaders in Assiut and Sohag advised the partners not to proceed with street film screenings, as managing audiences at such public events can be very challenging. The Luxor organizations addressed this challenge by working with leaders and holding the film screenings in front of the leaders' homes, to crowds of 20 to 25 people.

Informal meetings, designed for leaders to meet for a cup of tea to discuss issues and how to use what was learned in TA'ALA to improve their communities, were not effective. Since neither leaders nor partners took firm ownership of these meetings, they became an obligation and many leaders were attending the meeting pro forma. The meetings might have been more effective if leaders had initiated them or if partners had encouraged the leaders to take ownership by selecting the location, time and agenda items.

LESSONS LEARNED

A variety of lessons were learned collectively by the project team by means of regular reflection sessions, quarterly meetings with the partner organization teams, and feedback gathered by the project team using accountability tools and the project's mid-term evaluation. CRS TA'ALA staff took the lead in the analysis and reflections, with project partner observations and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning tools providing further assistance to CRS staff to access key information.

Build on existing community initiatives: The project should have taken into consideration the already established intervention mechanisms in the community and designed activities to complement and improve them to achieve project goals. For instance, writing messages of peace was an alien concept to some leaders participating in the project. The result was inoperable documents developed primarily to "complete homework assignments." The messaging component was more appropriate with leaders who already had access to stable constituencies, like teachers and religious leaders.

Enhance partner organization capacity, especially in leadership and project management: The project and any future intervention should continue building the capacities of the partners, as they will carry on using these skills in their future community interventions. The partners have taken on these responsibilities and, in terms of applying peacebuilding methodologies, are in good shape. However, when it comes to managing people and driving change

through community initiatives, a lot of work needs to be done in terms of leadership skills and project management capacity.

Apply action-oriented activities along with trainings from the very

beginning: Any future interventions should have a greater focus on action-oriented activities, instead of dedicating extensive time to trainings. When TA'ALA leaders were only involved in trainings, during the first year of the project, they grew restless. Leaders reported that they did benefit from the intervention, but an entire year of trainings was seen as too much. Message dissemination was not engaging enough for many of the leaders. Trainings should be mixed with action-oriented activities running in parallel. TA'ALA also initially struggled with inconsistent attendance by young people; however, many became more engaged during the cultural activities, suggesting that both challenges could be met by having more action-based activities.

A special focus should be placed on working with mothers, to counter potential spoiler effects and encourage their contribution to peacebuilding:

Mothers play a large role in perpetuating violence in the villages, and more attention should be given to helping them play a constructive role. During focus group discussions, young people expressed frustration regarding the challenges they faced to allow their interfaith friendships to grow, because their mothers prevent them from meeting. Mothers and other community members openly shared that mothers encourage their sons to “finish their fight” if there is a conflict. It seems evident that many women are not acting as peacebuilders in Upper Egypt.

THE APPLIED LESSONS AND THEIR EFFECTS

Several lessons were extracted and applied during implementation. For example, the lesson pertaining to action-oriented programming was only learned after beneficiaries grew restless. It was addressed by arranging with partners to condense the training time and to move on to the action component. The capacity and sustainability lesson learned was addressed by creating a mentor role for the leaders during the planning and implementation of community initiatives.

A final evaluation shed light on another weakness in terms of the sustainability of the structures created by the project. It stated that the youth groups had not developed formal assemblies that could live on after the end of the project.

During the design of the follow-on peacebuilding project, BOKRA, extra care was given to planning project activities that fit into the already existing life system of communities. The preponderant role of different stakeholders, like mothers, in the perpetuation of the conflict cycle was also taken into consideration in the design.



TA'ALA's contribution to CRS' justice and peacebuilding work focused on refining the approach. While many peacebuilding projects employ connector projects as a strategy for increasing social cohesion, TA'ALA took a step beyond to focus explicitly on strengthening both leader and youth capacities to de-escalate conflicts, each in their own spheres of influence. The curricula developed for training leaders and youth are a resource for other peacebuilding projects, particularly those that deal with exploring identity issues. These required participants to engage in introspection about the components of their own identities, including their roots and their affiliations.

A young woman participating in TA'ALA leads Christian and Muslim youth in a joint cultural activity in Nekheila village in Assiut. *Emad Kamil/Assiut Coptic Diocese Development Office*

SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES

For CRS/Egypt, the strong partnerships formed through TA'ALA have become a platform to better position emergency interventions, particularly for the integration of peacebuilding approaches in emergency responses, for example, in the aftermath of religious violence in Assiut in 2013. The relationships with the partner organizations have grown stronger, and CRS has become a partner of choice for these organizations.

TA'ALA staff and partners also worked with CRS' Africa-wide Capacity for Interreligious Community Action (CIRCA) project. CIRCA exposed partners to the work of other peacebuilders through examples shared by the CIRCA facilitator and connector projects.

Prior to TA'ALA, CRS/Egypt was predominantly known to others for its work with refugees and emergency response. TA'ALA and CIRCA allowed CRS to enter into the peacebuilding community in Egypt. Working with Misriyati (peacebuilding consultants) on curriculum development has created strong links with an organization that is deeply involved in peacebuilding in Egypt. TA'ALA also allowed CRS to link up with other local organizations such as Soliya and the Regional Center for Mediation and Dialogue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Increase peace and conflict awareness of programming staff in other sectors.** Enhanced awareness would allow these organizations to integrate peacebuilding concerns and approaches into their work. Peacebuilding should not be tackled using a stand-alone approach. Many partners have expressed interest in acquiring tool to assess their existing programs through a peacebuilding lens, for example, how their programs are contributing to peace and social justice in their communities, and how they can maximize peacebuilding impacts while continuing to work on other strategic issues.
- **Support and expand networking and knowledge exchanges, especially with academic and research entities, to better study the nature of the conflicts.** Such research in Upper Egypt would have been an excellent source of secondary data for designing TA'ALA. Collaboration with researchers could also have aided in the design of data collection tools, such as assessment questions, and monitoring tools and evaluation methodologies.
- **Conduct broad consultations with other peacebuilders in the field prior to designing projects.** Finally, it is a recommended good practice, when possible, to meet with other peacebuilders in the field prior to project design. These consultations can provide concrete learning opportunities from on-the-ground successes as well as failures.

Afterword

NELL BOLTON

As the case studies in this book illustrate, investing in interreligious collaboration for peace generates momentum towards ongoing joint initiatives. This affects not only organizations like CRS and its partners—each project examined here has led to a follow-on opportunity—but especially community participants. In the Mindanao case, for example, trained leaders applied their skills to resolve additional land conflicts, and community members' newly strengthened interreligious solidarity led them to identify and address mutual development needs. Participants in social cohesion trainings in CAR went on to play key roles in the country's political transition, bringing to this task a more inclusive vision for their communities and their nation. Religious and clan leaders in Egypt are opening their homes to one another, and at least one partner organization found that the credibility they gained from the initial project opened new doors for interreligious collaboration.

Before it can be self-sustaining or self-replicating, however, interreligious action for peace requires a significant investment of effort and time. As repeated throughout the lessons learned and recommendations, forging strong relationships and skills for interreligious peacebuilding rests on a foundation of intensive capacity strengthening, and ongoing accompaniment provided by a sufficient complement of personnel. Interreligious collaboration is relational work, and there are no shortcuts. Several of the cases, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and CAR, suggest as well that programs should develop support systems or alumni networks so that participants can support one another in the challenging process of working to change established social patterns.

Broadening the range of leaders involved in interreligious peacebuilding can also help to reinforce multiple channels for building social cohesion and pursuing social change. Many of these programming examples illustrate the potential benefits of working with and through recognized faith leaders to mobilize broader constituencies within their religious communities, and to act as champions for cross-religious collaboration. Frequently, however, women and youth fall outside the formal leadership structure of their religious tradition. This limits the possibilities for catalyzing and empowering young

leaders for change, or engaging women holistically as both agents of peace or potential spoilers. The challenge is to engage not only those holding formal leadership positions or titles, but those who may possess the personal qualities to convene, inspire, and galvanize others. And despite the particular focus of this book, interreligious collaborations must extend beyond a simple Muslim-Christian dyad, particularly to include traditional leaders—as done in Mindanao, in Kenya, and with clan leaders in Egypt. Indeed, prospects for social change are often limited without the participation of traditional leaders.

Another growing edge for our approach to interreligious action relates to structural change. Several of the cases, for example in Bosnia, CAR and elsewhere, highlight missed or under-explored opportunities to extend the personal and relational transformations experienced by direct project participants to effect changes at higher levels or to embed such changes in governance structures and systems. Outcomes from CIRCA and Mindanao, on the other hand, provide examples of how interreligious action projects equipped religious leaders to become more influential in working for peace and reconciliation through various government institutions and processes, including the empowerment of minority leaders in Mindanao to claim their rights. Interreligious action for peace can and should be a vector for pursuing social justice.

The practical lessons and recommendations presented in this book are continuing to inform programming, partnerships, and research in our organization. CRS' ongoing Advancing Interreligious Peacebuilding initiative is probing deeper into learning from the application of the 3B (binding, bonding, and bridging) framework to interreligious peacebuilding, exploring the contribution of self-reflection and introspection to healthy relationships within and among groups. Also on the learning agenda are questions about more robust engagement of young people in interreligious peacebuilding, and approaches to strengthening capacities and motivations for interreligious engagement. Finally, we are exploring the possibilities of using connector projects of the type described in many of these cases as springboards for expanded interreligious collaborations across development and humanitarian programs. For a multifaceted organization such as CRS, the cases in this book have significant implications for advancing the agency's commitment to justice and peacebuilding integration across sectors, and the interreligious peacebuilding portfolio can serve as a platform for broader forms of interfaith programming. We trust this volume will prove equally useful in stimulating other organizations' and researchers' ongoing learning and practice in the field of interreligious peacebuilding.

Contributors

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