BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES TO ENJOY THEIR FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

A TRAINING MANUAL
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A TRAINING MANUAL

EDITORIAL TEAM
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Foreward

This handbook is a culmination of the efforts by Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), Islamic Relief Kenya (IRK), the Network of Traditional Peacemakers, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) and Tangaza University College. Together these organizations are implementing a project titled “Religious minorities in Kenya: Overcoming divides, respecting rights” and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development.

The objective of this project is to address the problems affecting the full enjoyment of rights by the Muslim minority and the African Traditional Religions (ATR) communities in Kenya, arising from mistrust and excessive repression by the State authorities, misunderstandings with other faith-communities, and limited knowledge of constitutional rights, including promotion of gender equality. The project particularly supports dialogue across faith groups, and between minority faith groups and state institutions, to positively influence the law and its implementation concerning minorities’ rights.

The overall objective of the project is that minorities of Muslim faith in Kenya see their rights upheld and overcome divides with other faith groups and State authorities. The long-term impact resulting from this is that violence and other human rights violations based on religious discrimination or other religiously-described divisions will substantially decrease in Kenya.

The project outcomes that will contribute to the overall objectives are:

- Increased religious literacy on the respect to other religious groups among religious actors and public institutions in the targeted counties.
- Improved inter-faith working relationships both locally and nationally hence expanding constitutional rights enjoyment
- Enhanced awareness of decision-makers and public audiences on the common ground between faiths and constitutional rights and on the relevant best practices in promoting minorities’ rights at local and national level

The project’s theory of change holds that: If religious literacy stating the respect for other religions/groups is better known and upheld by religious actors and public institutions, if inter-faith work highlighting the common ground between faiths and promoting awareness about constitutional rights is carried out at local and national level, if the related best practices in promoting minorities’ rights are communicated convincingly to decision-makers and audiences through widespread modern media, then minorities’ rights have higher chances to be upheld and improved by all actors, duty bearers and State institutions, which are obligated to ensure equity and equality.

Kenya being a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society with the major religions being Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and the Baha’i Faith. Others are the Jews, Buddhists and African Traditional Religions. The interaction, on a daily basis, among
people of different faiths therefore, in this kind of a society is inevitable.

The potential for violent conflicts within this context is insurmountable, and to change from a culture of violence into a culture of peace requires a transformation of problems to creative and constructive solutions that answer the needs of those involved.

When we think about violence, discrimination and exclusion, the challenges may seem to be insolvable. However, these challenges are fundamentally connected. Ignorance and misunderstandings and assumptions based on a lack of communication and mistrust, feed discrimination and violence.

Just as there can be common roots of violence, discrimination and exclusion, there can also be common solutions. Successfully addressing these three humanitarian challenges requires a change of mindsets, attitudes and behavior.

We all need to come to the place of embracing a universal mind and behavior shift from the way we currently think and interact: from being locked into differences to valuing diversity and pluralism; from adverse reaction to joint response and even further to proactive prevention; from exclusion based on fear to connection based on our common humanity; and from resorting to verbal or physical violence when feeling threatened to constructive dialogue and trust.

We are in urgent need of a values-based transformation of human behavior that is easily attainable through Interreligious Dialogue. As we start with ourselves, seeing that we all carry bias and prejudice, awareness, questioning and critical self-reflection will help break conditioning or correct bias learned through schooling, media and upbringing.

The manual emerges with sound principles that envisage the coming together of religious people, on the basis of commonality and widely shared values with the intention of realizing an environment of trust and a network of co-operation.

This training manual therefore poses to seize the opportune faith based structures that would enhance the inculcation of culture of trust, continuous sharing, co-operation and sustainable collaboration among religious communities and the entire Kenya populace.

The manual visualizes the training of forum members and modelling them into community of hope, solidarity, forgiveness and advocates for understanding, tolerance and respect within the entire society.

The guide contains resources for individuals and groups asking:

- How can we help lessen fear and mend division within religious communities, as well as among religions by deepening inter-faith and inter-faith dialogue?
How can we create a “safe space” for people of diverse faiths to work together in support of conflict resolution, healing, reconciliation?

How can we collectively learn to use our differences as assets in contributing to more comprehensive peace processes?

As people of shared and diverse principles, how can we develop the sensibilities, tools, and skills for dealing with differences of many kinds from an interfaith perspective?

How can we best mobilize sustainable, constructive action?
# MODULE ONE: BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Religions in Kenya

The predominant religions in Kenya are 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Traditional Religion</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahai, Buddhism and Hinduism</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Religious Pluralism

Kenya is a country of religious pluralism, with the presence of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and African Traditional Religion. Followers of these religions have co-existed peacefully and tolerated each other, despite the religious pluralism and diversity, the country has not experienced any religious conflicts over the years. However, suspicions, hostility, and limited knowledge of each other’s religion exist between the different religious and faith communities.

This tension has been exacerbated by the limited knowledge of the teaching of the different religions, for instance, the ideals and teachings of both Christianity and Islam form the fundamental basis for religious pluralism, tolerance and dialogue between the different religious groups and faith communities.

1.2.1 Christianity

The fundamental teachings of Christianity revolve around the concept of unconditional love, justice and tolerance as taught by Jesus Christ. This is underscored in the concept of the Church as a family of God. The principles of the church emphasizes the need to avoid all forms of conflicts based on ethnicity, nationality, and racial differences (Galatians 3:26, 28). It is a basic Christian missionary duty to proclaim to all, the way of salvation in Jesus Christ:

“You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ...there is neither a Jew nor a Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 117).

Christian principles expound on the principles of human rights, including ideals of reconciliation, love, sympathy, forgiveness, justice, peace and compassion for fellow human beings even when they are aliens (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34; 1 Corinthians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4). In Christianity, the covenant between God and Abraham was for the benefit of all people, as the “nations” played a role in the salvation history. This is exemplified in the mission and teachings of Jesus in whose life respect for the faith and devotion of others was respected. Jesus demonstrated that no one is excluded from the Kingdom of God, whether sinners or righteous: a Samaritan, a Galilean, a Roman Centurion, or a Judean Pharisee. All can enter the Kingdom of God when they turn to the Lord (Borrmans, 1990, 35). According to the Vatican Council, Christians are supposed to engage in conversation with others.

1.2.2 Islam

Islam is an Arabic word which means “surrender, submission, commitment and peace.” Thus, Islam can be defined as a path to attain complete peace through voluntary submission to the divine will. Islam is a monotheistic faith centered around belief in one God (Allah). In this regard, it shares some beliefs with Judaism and Christianity by tracing its history back to the patriarch Abraham, and ultimately to the first prophet, Adam. All the prophets preached the same universal message of belief in one God and kindness to humanity. The last in the series of prophets was Muhammad. Muhammad who was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia around 570 CE. The Qur’an deals with general principles and guidelines regarding relations to other religion and faiths (Irfan, 2007, 34).
There are numerous verses where the Quran establishes the rule of the freedom of religion: “There is no compulsion in religion (Q. 2:256)”; “Unto you your religion, unto me my religion” (Q.109:6).

This demonstrates that the Quran accepts the pluralism of religions and affirms the unity of faith but insists on sincere faith in God and works of righteousness (Q.2:62; 3:69). The teaching of the Quran visages Muslim encounter with Jews and Christians who are referred to as Ahl al-Kitab (the People of the Book). Positive references to the Ahl al-Kitab are: 2:62; 5:69; 3:55, 199; 5:82. The Quran calls for mutual recognition and acceptance of Christians and Jews. Prophet Muhammad regarded his message to be consonant with, and complementary to, that of the Torah and the Gospel.

The Quran regards both the Torah and the Gospel as sources of guidance and light. This is clear from the Quran’s frequent reference to the witness of the People of the Book to its truth and authenticity. The Quran assures the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in the face of opposition from his people:

“If you are in doubt concerning that which we have sent to you, then enquire of those who have been reading the scriptures before you”(Q 10:94).

The Qur’an also directs its wavering followers to the people of earlier scriptures for knowledge and reassurance (Q.16:43). These references demonstrate the unity of faith and purpose, which according to the Quran should exist among the Muslims and other religions.

The ideal relation envisioned by the Qur’an between Muslims and other religions is not only one of accommodation and co-existence, but also of amity and mutual respect as demonstrated in the Qur’an (5:82-83, cf. 5:84-85). The Qur’an recognizes the good intentions of non-Muslims even where it considers their actions to be in error (Q.57:27). This is a clear acknowledgement of tolerance and accommodation for other religions. The teachings of the Quran reach out to others through Da’wah (outreach or propagation). Muslims are supposed to invite all people to the path of Allah; this is emphatic particularly to Christians (Q. 3:64). People who do not pay attention to the message should be approached again (Q 5:108; 47:32). The responsibility of a Muslim is to present the truth to the people and not to force them to accept it (Q. 39:41; 16:82,125; 24:54; 50:45)! Quran guarantees non-Muslims that their religious sentiments will be given due respect and that their right to their faith should not be encroached upon (Q.29:46; 6:108).

1.2.3 African Traditional Religions (ATR)

African Traditional Religions are the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of Africans. They are religions, which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebearers of the present Africans. These are being practiced today in various forms, shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be either Muslims or Christians. We need to explain the word “traditional”. This word means indigenous, which is aboriginal or foundational, handed down from generation to generation, upheld and practiced by Africans today. This is a heritage from the past but treated not as a thing of the past but as that which connects the past with the present and the present with eternity. This is not a “fossil “religion, a thing of the past or dead religion. It is a religion that is
practiced by living men and women.

In Kenya, one such group are the “traditional” Mijikenda institution of the Makaya (singular: kaya) and its political leaders (kaya elders) have played in post-colonial times. The Makaya were originally fortified settlements of the Mijikenda peoples, surrounded by forest and led by councils of elders’, they acted as political and ritual capitals of the various Mijikenda peoples.

African traditional religions, advocate for the protection of human dignity under God; advocates for peace and tolerance; justice and fairness. It also advocates for progress and development; protection of lives and property; promotion of the common good and creation of conditions conducive to human freedom, civil and religious.

The ATRs are wrongly called superstitious as their beliefs are based on deep reflections and long experience. Superstition is a readiness to believe and fear of something without proper grounds. ATRs show the way people think about the universe and their attitude towards life itself. ATR beliefs are concerned with topics such as God, spirit, human life, magic, the hereafter and so on. The values and morals of ATR are strongly rooted with ideals to safeguard or uphold the life of the people in their relationship with one another and the world around them. These values and morals cover topics like truth, justice, love, right, wrong, good and evil, beauty, decency, respect for other people and property. Other topics include the keeping of promises and agreement, praise and blame, crime and punishment, the rights and responsibilities of the individual and his/her community character, integrity and so on.

1.3 State and Religion

Chapter 4, Article 8 of the Constitution of Kenya states clearly, “There shall be no State religion” (COK 2010). Such a strong disavowal of religious establishment by the state effectively welcomes the wide range of religious practices existing in Kenya and thereby fosters the unity in diversity that is a prominent aspirational goal of the 2010 Constitution. Promoting unity is especially challenging for Christianity, the majority religion, has long been associated with Kenya’s political leaders and dominant social groups. Relatedly, religious minorities, most notably Muslims and groups practicing African traditional religion like Kaya elders of Mijikenda, should not see the State as being equal to Christianity.

The inclusion of the Kadhis’ Courts is a successful example of supporting pluralism that results directly from the constitutional process and that also offers the promise of fostering unity. The Kadhi’s Court in the Constitution resembles those that emerged in other places worldwide where Muslim minorities have sought state recognition and protection for a variety of religious practices (e.g., use of public space for worship, ability to wear religious clothing) or for the use of Islamic family.

Allowing space for the transformation of ideas and practices is key to embracing pluralism in any democratic society. The efforts to include attention to process in developing the Constitution resulted in an approach to religious pluralism and co-existence which ensures the recognition of religious pluralism fosters the governing values enshrined in the Constitution. These include “human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized” (Art. 10 (2) (b) COK of 2010).
1.4 Five fundamental human rights that are guaranteed under the Kenyan Constitution

Fundamental and essential human rights in Kenya are covered in Chapter 4 of the Kenyan Constitution that came into effect in 2010. The Bill of Rights is one of the most comprehensive in Kenya covering basic, social-political, and economic rights. Part 2 of Chapter 4 covers rights and fundamental freedoms. The five (5) of the most important provisions of the Chapter are the following:

1. The right to life

Every person has the right to life. The constitution recognizes this as beginning at conception. A person shall not be deprived of life, that is, killed, murdered, or executed either by state or non-state actors unless it is under the provision of the constitution. It must be noted that the death penalty is still applicable in Kenya but has not been enforced for over 30 years. The constitution also outlaws abortion unless it is advised by a legally recognized medical practitioner to save the life of the mother or permitted under other circumstances like rape.

2. Freedom of conscience, religion, belief and opinion

The constitution and other laws and policies prohibit religious discrimination and protect religious freedom, including the freedom to practice any religion or belief through worship, teaching, or observance and to debate religious questions. The constitution of Kenya 2010 Chapter 4, part 11, article 29-33 clearly states the following:

01. Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion.

02. Every person has the right, either individually or in community with others, in public or in private, to manifest any religion or belief through worship, practice, teaching or observance, including observance of a day of worship.

03. A person may not be denied access to any institution, employment or facility, or the enjoyment of any right, because of the person’s belief or religion

04. A person shall not be compelled to act, or engage in any act, that is contrary to the person’s belief or religion

3. The right to equality and freedom from discrimination

The Kenyan constitution states that every person is equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection by the law. All persons have the right to the full enjoyment of essential rights and fundamental freedoms including the right to equal political, economic, social, and cultural opportunities. State and non-state actors are prohibited from discriminating based on race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language or birth.
4. The Right to freedom and security of the person

The constitution guarantees the freedom and security of every person in Kenya. This includes the right not to be detained without trial by state actors unless in the case of an emergency. Every person is also protected from violence from both state and non-state actors. This includes corporal punishment, cruel, humiliating, and degrading treatment. The law also protects the person against torture whether physical or psychological, from private and public sources.

5. The Prohibition of Slavery, Servitude, and Forced Labour

The right to protection from slavery, servitude and forced labour is also among the five fundamental rights provided for by the constitution that cannot be withdrawn under any circumstances. This is also anchored in the International covenant on civil and political rights as part of the international human rights law.
The purpose of this module is to help the participants get a better understanding of conflict, the positive and negative impacts of conflict, and finally help them know the emerging forms of violence/conflict. The manifestation of conflict in our day to day lives is clear in different spheres of our communities: from religious conflicts, conflicts at work, at the family level, conflicts emanating from scarcity of resources, among others.

While religions have developed different belief systems over the course of time, all religions advocate tolerance, kindness towards others, and non-violence. Religious leaders have a high degree of respect and influence in their communities. If religious leaders can operate out of shared values, they can play a major role in healing the divides left by civil war. These first models explore the essential components of inter-faith peacebuilding, its role in social reconstruction, and the indivisible link between peace and social justice for all faith groups.

Focusing on religious conflicts, due to security concerns in some parts of Kenya like Garissa, in a study conducted by the Peace Makers Network, both Muslims and Christians in Garissa said they did not have sufficient safeguards for
their religious rights; with each of the groups acknowledging different reasons for the insufficiencies of safeguards.\(^1\) Among the ways in which conflict in religion was evidenced was by reasons given such as locals holding negative perceptions of other religious groups, selective execution by extremist groups, non-tolerance of non-Muslim lifestyles and culture in the predominantly Muslim areas and unequal resource distribution amongst religious communities. In this case, an illustration was given through a case from Mandera, that madrasas are built with public resources at county level, but not churches or schools. These are just a few of the ways in which conflict within the religious domain is evident.

2.1 Understanding the Root Causes of Interfaith Conflict and Tension

To successfully intervene in a conflict, we need to understand its sources and patterns of escalation.

The causes of conflict are complex and multi-layered, and are perceived differently by different groups.

Joint analysis deepens mutual understanding and can lead to more sustainable solutions. This section offers a variety of tools for mapping conflicts. In any given training, one might select one to three exercises, depending on which aspects of the conflict one hopes to address.

Conflict is part of human existence. It can arise from many overlapping sources, including: competing needs or values; political, economic, or social injustice; denial of human rights; unequal access to resources; and cycles of revenge. Religion in of itself is rarely the source of conflict.

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**Training Activity One**

**Facilitators notes:**

**Definition of conflicts:** A conflict is disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles, its part and parcel of life, and its effects depends on how its managed. As such, it may be seen as neutral. It may be viewed as both positive and negative depending on how its addressed.

Explain to the participants that it is impossible to live in a world free of conflicts, conflict will always occur but the most important thing is to make sure that they are not left unresolved as this could have adverse short-term/or long-term effects. Its also important to ensure that these conflicts are resolved in a peaceful way. Cause of conflicts include:

- Different opinions
- Limited resources
- Different values
- Lack/poor communication skills
- Different priorities
- Religious differences
- Political differences

People will try to solve conflicts in different ways depending on the way they show consideration for their own and other people’s interests. This can be using any of the following conflict management approaches

- Avoidance
- Competition – I win, you lose
- Accommodation-I lose or give in
- Compromise- we both get something
- Collaboration- we both win.
When conflicts are left unresolved or are solved in a negative way, they have adverse effects on the people involved in the conflicts as well as those around them. These effects can be either short term or long term.

- Violence
- Hatred
- Displacement
- Physical injuries and psychological trauma.
- Fear and insecurity
- Loss of life
- Fear and insecurity

2.1.1 Levels of Conflict

01. Conflict within us. Sometimes when expectations are too unrealistic or when we feel we are not good enough. We may have conflict within ourselves. At other times, we know what is right to do and yet we do the wrong thing.

02. Conflict that occurs between two individuals

03. Conflicts within (inside) a group

04. Conflicts among different groups.

2.1.2 Understanding emerging forms of violence

Training Activity Two

Objective:
To recognize that conflict is not the problem, but how it is managed, and to explore the many different levels at which conflict manifests.

Method:
01. Write the word conflict in the center of a flip chart paper and have participants speak out associated words. Most of them will be negative. Ask the question is conflict always negative? When is it negative and why?

02. Divide into small groups and ask participants to reflect on their experiences of conflict at different levels, noting similar issues and themes across levels.

Kenya is a country of diversity, with 43 tribes, many different religions, political parties, and wide range of resources. These climatic differences are major and natural resources are diverse. The challenge for Kenya, like many other country, is to accept differences while also promoting social cohesion. A breakdown in social cohesion can lead to a breakdown in community resilience. This in turn can lead
to a wide range of social problems including conflict and violence.

Kenya have enjoyed a democratic space for many years now and the constitution ensures that Kenyans have a right to express their opinions, religious believe and ideas through peaceful means.

Often, this is abused when people express themselves in violent ways that often end up in destruction of property and sometimes human lives. The government has a duty to protect its citizens and takes measures when the right of freedom and expression is violated.

We all have a responsibility as individuals or communally, to stop acts of violence before they occur. Most of times, violence is a response to frustration, feelings of not being cared for, and may thrive among those cut off from family, friends, and the larger community.

The combination of frustration, isolation, and introduction to highly charged motives for violence is the most potent combination of factors in the process that leads to some acts of violence.

Acts of violence occur at the end of the process that often starts much earlier. It is during this time that preventive measures can be taken. At the early stages, the measures simply involve caring for vulnerable individuals. Such acts are motivated less by preventing violence but by simply wanting to support and assist a person in distress.

Fig. 3: Iceberg Model: Causes of Inter-Faith Conflict

Objective:
By the end of this topic, the participants should be able to:
- Identify one emerging form of violence
- Demonstrate an awareness of an emerging form of violence
- Acquire positive attitudes and skills towards prevention of emerging forms of violence.

Method:
Group-work, Cases study, and discussions

Objective:
To understand the visible, hidden, and interconnected causes of inter-faith conflict
The iceberg represents the visible and hidden causes of inter-faith conflicts. The positions and assertions that are at the surface of a given conflict are only the tip of the iceberg, while deeply held values, wounds, assumptions, etc. remain underneath. Like an iceberg, the deepest and most dangerous sources of inter-faith conflict are not visible.

### Training Activity Two

**Objective:**
To examine the roots (causes) and impact (consequences) of a particular conflict or problem.

**Method:**
Plenary or small groups identify the many roots of a particular conflict or problem and then explore all the effects that arise from the roots. Write these on branches, then drawing twigs and leaves to show the further ramifications of those effects. The group can talk about how the effects/leaves drop from the tree and feed the roots of the conflict, demonstrating the cyclical nature of causes and consequences of violent conflict.

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Draw a blank iceberg on a flip chart. Explain why conflict is like an iceberg. Ask participants to suggest visible and invisible causes of a particular inter-faith conflict. Write all suggestions on the iceberg. Ask participants to reflect on the connections between causes, and what this diagram implies about the effectiveness of different approaches to resolving conflicts. Explore sweeping and incorrect generalizations such as “religion causes conflict” and encourage more in-depth examination.

**Fig. 4. Tree Model: Roots and Impact of Conflict**
2.1.3 Dividers and Connectors

In all societies, communities are connected through common needs and interests while simultaneously divided by competition to satisfy these concerns. Inter-faith peacebuilders hope to increase connections for the sake of cooperation and mutual understanding, while decreasing attitudes and behaviors that undermine good will and further escalate tensions.

Training Activity

**Objective:**
To create participant awareness that an effective inter-faith program should be designed to focus on strengthening connectors and weakening dividers between different faith groups. Further work would then consider possible activities and programs that achieve this.

**Method:**
Divide participants into small groups. Ask groups to discover those connectors that currently exist between faith groups, and to then name dividers that weaken intergroup ties. Explore which groups in society might be most amenable to building connections and which groups would find this most difficult. Next, lead a plenary brainstorm of specific interventions that could be implemented by participants’ own organizations to build on the connectors and
2.1.4 Needs and Fears Mapping

Training Activity

Objective:

To understand the needs and fears of all sides of a conflict from the perspective of each side, in order to determine viable solutions.

Method:

minimize the dividers. Draw on participants’ resources from their own life and work experiences, and offer stories from other parts of the country.

Demonstrate on a flip chart how to develop a “Needs and Fears Map” as shown above. The map can be drawn for 2-5 sides, or actors, and the shape of the map can be changed accordingly. The facilitator should map a conflict as an example. Break into groups of 4 – 6 to create needs and fears maps around a particular inter-faith conflict or tension. (Allow 45 to 60 minutes for group work.) The group should just discuss their understanding of the needs and fears of each side and then develop the map after reaching some consensus. Warn the groups that they must make every effort to “walk in the shoes” of each side to understand the needs and fears from each perspective. Reflect with the group on their learning from the exercise. Often, groups notice that, while the positions of the sides are very different, many of the needs and fears are similar. A solution is more likely to be acceptable to all sides if it addresses each group’s needs and fears.
2.1.4 Needs and Fears Mapping

**Training Activity**

**Objective:**
To understand the needs and fears of all sides of a conflict from the perspective of each side, in order to determine viable solutions.

**Method:**
Demonstrate on a flip chart how to develop a "Needs and Fears Map" as shown above. The map can be drawn for 2-5 sides, or actors, and the shape of the map can be changed accordingly. The facilitator should map a conflict as an example. Break into groups of 4 – 6 to create needs and fears maps around a particular inter-faith conflict or tension. (Allow 45 to 60 minutes for group work.) The group should just discuss their understanding of the needs and fears of each side and then develop the map after reaching some consensus. Warn the groups that they must make every effort to "walk in the shoes" of each side to understand the needs and fears from each perspective. Reflect with the group on their learning from the exercise. Often, groups notice that, while the positions of the sides are very different, many of the needs and fears are similar. A solution is more likely to be acceptable to all sides if it addresses each group’s needs and fears.

Fig. 7: Understanding Needs and Fears

2.1.5 Emerging Forms of Violence

Violence is the expression of conflict in a way that threatens human life or the quality of human life. Forms of violence include physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, economic, political, and institutional violence.

Communities play a vital role in assisting people move away from violent extremism and intervening to stop acts of
violence before they are committed. These are different forms of violence based on the cause for example:

Kenya is a country of diversity, with 43 tribes, many different religions, political parties and wide range of resources. These climatic differences are major and natural resources are diverse. The challenge for Kenya, like many other countries, is to accept differences while also promoting social cohesion. A breakdown in social cohesion can lead to a breakdown in community resilience. This in turn can lead to a wide range of social problems including conflict and violence.

Kenya have enjoyed a democratic space for many years now and the constitution ensures that Kenyans have a right to express their opinions, religious believes and ideas through peaceful means.

Often this is abused when people express themselves in violent ways that often end up in destruction of property and sometimes human lives. The government has a duty to protect its citizens and so takes measures when the right of freedom and expression is violated.

We all have responsibility, as individuals or communally, to stop acts of violence before they occur. Most of times, violence is a response to frustrations, to feelings of not being cared for, and may thrive among those cut off from family, friends and the large community. Some ideologies, both religious and secular, promote the use of violence. The combination of frustration, isolation and being introduced to highly charged motives for violence is the most potent combination of factors in the process leading some acts of violence.

Acts of violence occurs at the end of the process that often starts quite some time before. It is during this time before’ that preventive measures can be taken. At the very early stages during these measures simply involve carrying for vulnerable individuals. Such acts are motivated less by preventing violence than simply wanting to support and assist person in distress. This type of care is a responsibility of all citizens but is also offered by social service agencies where more professional attention is required.

Facilitators notes:

Recruitment into violence forms of violence happens when a person’s thinking and behavior become significantly different from how most members of their society and community view social issues and participate politically. Only small numbers of people get extremely indoctrinated and they can be from a diverse range of ethnic, national, political and religious groups. This can be referred to as being radicalized.

A person radicalized they begin to seek change significantly the nature of society and government. However, if someone decides that using fear, terror or violence is
justified to achieve ideological, political or social change—this is violent extremism.

Exactly what influences individuals to go down path of using or supporting violence to seek change can be difficult to determine, but there can be number of factors. The radicalization process in unique to each person who undergoes it, and in most cases will not cause serious harm. In exceptional circumstances, however, the decisions made by person radicalizing can result in a serious and lethal act of violent hatred or promote the use of violence for their cause require some form of intervention. This may come from family religious, community leaders or law enforcement.

**Issue based-violence**

Violent extremism related to a specific issue or cause such as animal liberation, environmental activism or anti-gun control, is known as issue based violent extremism. Most of the time people who push for a certain cause use peaceful means. However, when they use violence, this should cause concern.

**Ethno-religious or separatist violence.**

The actions of groups or individuals involved in violent political or independence struggles based on their race, culture, religious difference or ethnic background are often described as ethno-religious or separatist violent extremism. While such conflicts can evoke strong emotions in communities and many people feel compelled to help those affected by them, it is important to make sure that any actions one takes are legal.

Ask the participants to read the case study below and discuss the questions that follow.

**Case study on the emerging forms of violence**

Mohamed grew up in Mandera. He struggled with issues of self-acceptance. He often portrayed an aggressive behavior and rarely got along with his peers. He had problems living at home with his parents and often accused them of favoring his siblings. He severally threatened to run away and disappear. He made demands his parents could not financially meet. He was a loner both at the school and the community. He even considered suicide as option of escaping of his problems.

Severally on his way home, he met his cousin with a group of other youths who appeared tough. One day, his cousin and another group member approached him and asked him to join his groups. His cousin told him that he could be his great friend if he agreed to join the group. He told him that he now makes a lot of money and is free from home rules and “imprisonment”. He promised Mohamed that friendship if he adheres to all group rules and regulations. He explained to Mohamed that if he decides to join the group, he will have a lot of fun and money. Mohamed had observed a changed lifestyle of his cousin who was wearing awfully expensive things. Mohamed said he would think about it and let them know.

Mohamed really longed for a sense of belonging and to show his peers he was tougher than them. He wanted to make money and live well. The group was patient with him and allowed him to make his time. He felt this was caring group. He was slowly drawn to it eventually. He kept away from his peers and family and kept it secret. He participated in the group activities and within a short time was introduced to violent crimes. He saw himself as a hero and tough. He stopped looking for work.

After few years, Mohamed was stressed and missed going back to normal life. The group was not enjoyable as he initially thought it would be. It was full of crime, drugs and smoking weed. There was a lot of infighting and leadership wrangles. He began to wonder whether all the bad things he was told about other religions and tribes were true. He knew his life was in danger. He however, thought he had no choice but to stay in the group, given that he had run away from home. He knew he will be an outcast in the community. He felt stuck to this group, this made him abuse more drugs. He twice went to jail for committing petty crime. While in jail, Mohamed met a positive mentor who got interested in him. Eventually Mohamed gained his trust and shared his story with him. Mohamed got a shoulder to lean on. He newly found friend helped him took for treatment and counselling and helped him recover from drugs after leaving prison. He also helped him gain confidence and self-acceptance. Mohamed was later re-united to his family. He went back to work in different place. Together
with his mentor friend, Abdirashid now helps young disengage from illegal groups and sensitizes young people on the dangers of joining of such groups and ways of preventing it. Mohamed has many new friends now and extremely healthy self-image. He still struggles from the experiences, but he has good psycho-socio support.

**Discussions Questions.**

01. What led Mohamed to being recruited into the illegal group?

02. How would this have been prevented from happening?

03. What signs would the significant people in Mohamed’s life have noticed to cause an alarm?

**2.2 Understanding Dynamics of Power in Society**

**Training Activity**

**Objective:**

To review in simple and accessible form the ways power is used.

**Method:**

Discuss the ways these types of power are used at all levels of society. What are the contributions and dangers of each? How can

**Fig. 2: Three Types of Power**

- **Vertical power** can be used to make improvements in the lives of many, but through force, punishment, and manipulation it can be used to make people do things that they would not otherwise choose.

- **Horizontal power** is power with others. With horizontal power we use cooperation and influence to make joint decisions and take action with others.

- **Internal Power** is power from within. By getting in touch with our internal, spiritual power we develop clear vision and the courage to act according to our convictions.

relational leaders most effectively use the power that is vested in them? Why and how do they have influence?
2.3 Understanding Interfaith Peace Building

Training Activity

**Objective:**
To give participants an overview of the value and essential components of inter-faith peacebuilding.

**Method:**

01. Discuss in small groups and plenary why each component is important and how one builds upon another.

02. Have religious leaders speak in same-faith or inter-faith pairs (depending on the circumstances) about why they are interested in peacebuilding.

03. Have each faith group draw up a list of the principles of their faith that most contribute to inter-faith tolerance and reconciliation. The lists can be presented in plenary.

**Objective:**
To demonstrate that after violent conflict social, economic, and political peacebuilding are all required to build sustainable peace and all three are interrelated.

**Method:**
Discuss the role of inter-faith peacebuilding as a type of social peacebuilding. Where it can have the most impact?
Training Activity

Objective:
To illustrate that religious freedom is among a core set of human needs and rights that must be met to secure a sustainable peace, and the fact that human needs and rights are indivisible.

Activity:
Divide plenary into 3 groups, one for each core set of needs/rights. Each group speaks for the necessity of those needs/rights and the dangers of ignoring them.
MODULE THREE:
UNDERSTANDING INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT AND DIALOGUE

Building peace is a human heritage and capacity that has a long history in societies, cultures, and religious traditions. Capacities for creating societies of justice and peace are present in most faith traditions. The means are multiple and the desire and daily practice universal, even in the midst of great violence. They touch every level of human interaction and experience. Through this guide we hope to draw from, nourish, and contribute to what is already happening. We hope to become part of a conversation that brings more of it to light and strengthens collaborations.

Objective:

By the end of this topic, the participant should be able to

- Give the participants an opportunity to discover their own religious identity
- Present and discuss different levels/areas in which problems may arise in the encounter between religious difference
Facilitation process

Activity 1: Definition of interreligious dialogue.

01. In pairs ask the participants to brainstorm on what interreligious dialogue means (Encourage the participants to brainstorm in interreligious or inter-faith dialogue).

02. Invite them to share what they discussed as you write them on the flip char.

03. Using the suggested definitions, lead the participants to come with a working definition for use during the training.

3.1 The Interfaith Contribution to Peacebuilding

Groups and individuals working for interfaith understanding hold powerful keys for unlocking conflict, wherever it is found. Inherently, most faiths aim to bring peace to their followers and to humanity. At the same time, religious differences are often easily manipulated and used to mobilize communities and individuals for violence. Thus, learning to understand the meaning of religious differences – and becoming comfortable with the many diverse “voices” of religious and spiritual expression – reduces the possibility of religious radicalism and the intolerance, hatred, and violence that so often accompany it. It can also motivate people to actively engage in building connections and relationship across religious divides and act to correct injustice.

Every longstanding faith group has an historic reservoir of meanings that give shape to identity. They have powerful symbols and rituals that give expression to collective needs and desires. They also have a wealth of principles, values, and practices that can build peace and cooperative relationships among enemies.

Religious peacebuilding – which includes interfaith peacebuilding – is now a recognized area of practice and study in the larger peacebuilding field. It brings into play distinctive sets of meanings and interpretations, motivations, causes and effects, and strategies. Its contributions include the prophetic and moral voice and authority of faith, the institutional resources of many faith groups and communities, the intermediary and advocacy roles often played by religious and spiritual adherents, and also a focus on the restoration of relationships and community.

The discipline and transformative power of religious and
spiritual teachings and practices are a special ingredient that interfaith groups bring to peacebuilding as a whole. These include the vital qualities of empathy and compassion, courage and self-sacrifice, self-awareness and self-control; a belief in the transformative power of love and positive regard; faith in the face of seemingly impassible obstacles; and a predisposition toward healing and reconciliation.

Interfaith peacebuilding is a way to access these reservoirs of meaning and practice for the benefit of all. It is also a way of including a segment of society that often is excluded from power politics and formal peace processes.

Interfaith peacebuilding includes many types of initiatives and activities aimed at building understanding, respect, and joint action among people of faith. Examples include interfaith dialogue and the sharing of rituals and practices of faith; interfaith action on social welfare and economic development; and active peacemaking designed to bring parties in conflict together, to name just a few key categories of action.

Given that most people active in interfaith groups are private citizens with no special training but who are concerned about the situations in their communities and country and have a deep commitment to working for peace, activities at the grassroots are often most appropriate.

Peacebuilding activities that are especially suited to grassroots interfaith efforts are those that help build understanding and cooperation across lines of division in a society, and which develop new ways for dealing with differences peacefully and productively. Interfaith groups create spaces for safety, acceptance, understanding, insight, and transformation to occur. Simply coming together to work collaboratively in an interfaith setting is a peacebuilding action. It develops cultures of peace.

Grassroots interfaith peacebuilders make a difference by:

- Bringing diverse groups together listening with openness to others
- Educating and breaking down stereotypes
- Inspiring hope
- Building trust for dealing with tough issues
- Creating an inclusive sense of community that embraces those who are “other”.
- Being models of constructive ways of dealing with differences.
- Supporting a willingness to change unjust systems and structures that cause pain to others.

Fig. 1: An Overview of interfaith peacebuilding
The central circle represents the personal attitudes and perspectives that help an interfaith group to function. It suggests a spiritual center – the knowledge of and grounding in one’s own spiritual teachings. It calls for honesty and self-criticism in assessing how one lives the spiritual qualities and highest calling of one’s tradition. It also calls for knowledge of and openness to others, for empathy and compassion. Finally, it implies a willingness to change, to develop and grow.

The second circle represents the perspectives, attitudes, and skills in interfaith group relationships, including appreciation and respect, open communication, deep listening, and mutual trust. It asks us to be willing to have difficult conversations for the purpose of going deeper in our relationships and for enlarging our perspectives about our similarities and differences. Recognizing and accepting differences are not a simple act. And yet, as our experience in large and small conflicts shows us, these qualities and skills are critical for solving conflicts constructively, and for keeping them from spiraling into destructive forms. Good intentions are necessary, but they alone are not sufficient to solve conflicts or deal with differences.

The third circle represents the willingness to engage and build the skills that will help a group take on projects and activities in the broader community with confidence. This includes learning and practicing skills and methods for leading respectful and constructive dialogue, bringing healing and reconciliation to individuals and severed relationships, and finding nonviolent ways of resolving our differences. It takes wisdom and insight to respond appropriately to conflict situations. It takes courage, skill, and commitment to engage with conflict nonviolently, despite the pain of victimhood and suffering associated with conflict. It is also inspiring to be able to unlock the potential forces of change in individuals and communities through faith-based nonviolent strategies and practices.

The fourth circle represents the activities that will help a group honor the commitment to wise and responsible action and to the preparation it requires. Taking cohesive group action requires joint decision making, developing a good understanding of the needs and opportunities to serve, appreciating and using the resources already in the community as well as the assets within the group, identifying and working effectively with partners, creating a shared vision for what the group hopes to do and a plan for carrying it out, and doing it all through a process of shared leadership and careful listening, visioning, and participation. We need both critical analysis and a transformative vision to work effectively in building peace locally and globally.

We believe that these are all vital parts of the whole, and represent different activities, or perhaps different phases, in the life of an interfaith group. The three parts of the journey: inward, outward and in community are held together with spiritual discipline that keeps the whole in balance. This is the special challenge of interfaith peacebuilding: how do we create connected spirituality for connected action? – connected to people of different faiths and connected to our work in the world, whether we define that as outwardly-focused activity or as primarily an inward focus through prayer and inner transformation.

We know how easily conflict is fueled by certain religious teachings. The energy needed for peacebuilding has a different quality – it is made of bonds painstakingly built and maintained over time with trust and the willingness to take risks. Where conflicts are deep, this work may seem very small and very slow. We believe, however, that we have no choice, individually and collectively, but to learn to transform those attitudes, feelings, behaviors and structures that
3.2 Principles Guiding Interfaith Activities

Establishing Equality.

Religious and spiritual traditions offer different paths in the discovery of truth(s). In interfaith gatherings we assume that all members of the different faith traditions are equal. In interfaith work for peacebuilding, equality is a central core value.

Developing a Culture of Pluralism and Inclusion

A foundational value and principle of interfaith community-building and peacebuilding is pluralism. It recognizes the right of diverse faith traditions to coexist without promoting one view of religious truth. The interfaith group must never be a space for attempts at conversion. On the contrary, interfaith peacebuilding is precisely a forum for promoting inclusion of all faiths and all voices. There are, indeed, still boundaries that distinguish the diverse religious and spiritual identities brought into the interfaith circle. In the interfaith context, however, these boundaries must not be held up or manipulated to exclude another or to establish a sense of religious superiority on the part of some.

Creating a “Voluntary Atmosphere”

Leaders should insure that group members are “invited” to participate in activities in a manner that allows them to say “no” without feeling embarrassed or put on the spot. While we assume that for the most part people who join an interfaith group are ready to engage with other members, there are many reasons why a group member may not want to participate in a particular activity. He or she may be feeling vulnerable, angry, or even just bored. As adults, members take responsibility for regulating their participation in ways that help them feel in control of their learning. It is the leader’s job to do everything possible to create a productive and safe learning environment. It is the individual group members’ job to speak up and let others know how they are experiencing a certain activity, especially if it feels too risky to participate.

Preserving Symmetry

In interfaith peacebuilding, the principle of symmetry is employed to provide group members with an equal opportunity to articulate and express their religious identities and to fulfill their different spiritual needs. It is important, therefore, for leaders to be aware of asymmetries – imbalances – in relationships among members of the group and to safeguard against those dynamics in the group, particularly among parties with current or traditional enmities or a history of economic, social, and power asymmetries. Group must never be a space for attempts at conversion. On the contrary, interfaith peacebuilding is precisely a forum for promoting inclusion of all faiths and all voices. There are, indeed, still boundaries that distinguish the diverse religious and spiritual identities brought into the interfaith circle. In the interfaith context, however, these boundaries must not be held up or manipulated to exclude another or to establish a sense of religious superiority on the part of some.
certain kinds of information, touching, greeting, etc. Creating an atmosphere that invites sharing and participation, but leaves people free to choose not to, is critical.

**Going Beyond the “Comfort Zone”**

Leaders must also develop a sensitivity to know when it is appropriate to gently encourage participants to go beyond the types and levels of interaction that have become comfortable for them as a group. This is an important issue in interfaith work. Some groups may never want to take on activities that may cause some discomfort for members of the group. Others may be ready and willing to tolerate the discomfort in order to reach a new level of understanding and to connect at a deeper level. It is clear to the writers of this guide that there is a lot to be gained by going deeper together and that this is the challenging work of interfaith groups. At the same time, individuals or groups must never be made to feel less worthy or unsuccessful if they are not ready for more high-risk activities. Often times if the leaders are willing to move beyond their own comfort zone, their modeling of confidence can help other members join in. If, however, the leaders cannot tolerate the discomfort themselves, they will not be able to help others stretch in new ways.

**Building Participation**

It is a right of each member of an interfaith group to actively participate and to help shape, guide, and lead the group’s activities. The diverse perspectives and styles that different members bring can help the group discover and learn new ways of communicating and doing things – of being together in community and developing cultures of peace.

### 3.3 Definition of Interreligious-Intercultural-/Interfaith-Dialogue

Interreligious dialogue, also referred to as interfaith dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, (i.e. “faiths”) at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice their faith freely. Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example, between neighbors, in schools and in our places of work -it can take place in both formal and informal settings. In Kenya, Muslims and Christians live on the same streets; use the same shops, buses and schools. Normal life means that we come into daily contact with each other. Dialogue therefore, is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only—it is part of daily life during which different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tensions between them are the most tangible. The following are some guidelines for effective interreligious dialogue:

- Participants in interreligious dialogue cannot use the encounter as opportunities to defend their own traditions.
- Neither is interreligious dialogue a means to defend religion in general.
- There is a risk of conversion. Participants may find themselves transformed by the interfaith encounter.
Dialogue participants must reveal the beliefs that they hold closest and that define their religious tradition.

Interreligious dialogue is not a philosophical, theological or intellectual exercise. It is an expression of the participants’ lived faith lives. Therefore, interfaith encounters form communities of awareness.

WHAT INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AIMS TO ACHIEVE?

Dialogue seeks to:

- Increase mutual understanding and good relations
- Identify causes of tension in Christian Muslim relations. These are often economic, social or political rather than religious.
- Build understanding and confidence to overcome or prevent tensions.
- Break down the barriers and stereotypes which lead to distrust, suspicion and bigotry.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IS NOT:

- A way of converting the other. In dialogue each party remains true to their own faith.
- A space for arguing, attacking or disproving the beliefs of the other. It is about increasing mutual understanding and trust.

WHY DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS IS IMPORTANT.

Below are two quotations that highlight the urgency and need for Muslims and Christians to cooperate. The first is taken from an address made by Pope Benedict XVI to Ambassadors from Muslim countries in 2006 in which he said:

“Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is, in fact, a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends.”

The second quotation is from a letter signed by 137 Muslim Scholars and Leaders from across the Muslim world and sent to Christian leaders in 2007. It says:

“Muslims and Christians together make up over half the world’s population. Without peace and justice between these two religious’ communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians.”

These statements highlight the urgent need for Muslims and Christians to address the polarization that is growing between them. This has been fueled by wars, persecution, injustices and by individuals and groups stirring up religious divisions to achieve political or material gain. Dialogue between Muslims and Christians is needed now more than ever before to address the issues causing this growing
division. The fact that Muslims and Christians make up over 50% of the world’s population makes dialogue and cooperation imperative.

**THEREFORE, THERE IS A SENSE OF URGENCY, A NEED TO BUILD UPON THE GOOD RELATIONS THAT WE HAVE, AND TO PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE OF UNDERSTANDING, TRUST AND COOPERATION THAT CAN BE FOLLOWED BY MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.**

Key to this is the promotion of respect and understanding between Muslim and Christian neighbors in local streets and residential areas. Members of both faiths need to come to know each other personally. Local interfaith contact, cooperation and interaction, in short dialogue, is of great importance as it makes a major contribution in helping to create an integrated and cohesive community at ease with diversity and secure in a sense of common purpose.

“*We believe in the same God, the one God, the Living God who created the world... In a world which desires unity and peace, but experiences a thousand tensions and conflicts, should not believers favor friendship between the men and the peoples who form one single community on earth? Dialogue between Christians and Muslims is today more urgent than ever. It flows from fidelity to God. Sometimes, in the past, we have opposed and even exhausted each other in polemics and in wars ... I believe that today God invites us to change old practices. We must respect each other and we must stimulate each other in good works on the path to righteousness.*”

_Pope John Paul II, 1985. From a speech delivered to over 80,000 Muslims in Casablanca._

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**Training Activity: Roleplay on interreligious dialogue (to be used when training the primary actors)**

**materials – pens, flipchart**

**01.** In your own words as the facilitator, tell the participants to imagine that their community has organized a dialogue involving people of different faiths, and they will have to contribute to a debate on a specific topic as a role play. Remind them that this will be a roleplay and so it does not represent the individual’s belief in real life.

**02.** Mark 3 spaces in the room with “YES” “NO” “MIDDLE-GROUND” and ask the participants to the space that suits them after reading the topic of discussion: IS ANYTHING SACRED?

**03.** Give the participants 3 minutes to discuss what they think about the topic, then let all of them have an open discussion about the topic while you write on a flipchart (10 minutes)

**04.** Ask them to say how they felt in the course of the discussion – is interfaith dialogue positive or negative? (10 minutes)

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**Training Activity: Understanding the relationship between interfaith competence and human rights**

**01.** Watch a 3 minutes video on faith and human rights - from OHCHR (https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=43&v=EOxRUKWg430&feature=emb_logo)

The objective of this video and activity is to demonstrate that faith and human rights are mutually reinforcing, using a faith for human
3.4 Dialogue Practices to Promote Inter Faith Understanding and Cooperation

Violence and conflict can tear the social fabric of community life. It leaves behind deep wounds and undermines inter-group trust. The exercises in this section explore the impact of violence on identity, the importance of developing cross-cutting identities such as that of a “religious leader,” and steps towards replacing prejudice with genuine tolerance and appreciation of difference. In our experience, carefully facilitated inter-faith dialogues are one of the most powerful tools for developing mutual understanding, especially if combined with joint projects.
Training Activity

Objective:

To understand that our religious or ethnic identity is only one of many identities that we carry. When this identity is “wounded” through threat or violence it can become distorted and dominant.

Method:

Ask participants to draw their own wheel of identity showing all the identities that are important to them. They may discuss their wheels in pairs. Then discuss what happens when an identity is “wounded.” Discuss in small groups the role that “wounded identities” has played in local conflicts, and how building on cross cutting identities (such as religious leader) can restore relations.

Fig. 7: Cycle of Socialization

Objective:

To understand that intolerance and prejudice are learned attitudes that are transmitted through institutions of socialization. These attitudes can also be changed through exposure and moral development.
3.5 Inter-faith Dialogue: An Invitation to a New Conversation

Inter-faith dialogue can be a very helpful tool for building mutual understanding, but is best used after a group has already worked together, developed some degree of com-
fort and trust, and discovered some common goals. Sharing the values of respective faith traditions on tolerance and peace, joint conflict or problem analysis, and the previous exercises on issues of identity can all provide a valuable foundation.

Successful dialogue requires a structured approach, using carefully crafted questions so that participants feel safe speaking openly. Trust and understanding can then build slowly and steadily. Comfort with the dialogue process can be developed by starting in pairs and then working in smaller and larger groups, and then in plenary. Initial dialogue questions should not be too provocative, but as trust builds, dialogue questions can gradually touch on painful past experiences and real concerns for the future. Participants are always asked to speak from their own experience and from the heart. This avoids decent into political debate. Careful review of ground rules and the difference between debate and dialogue are essential preparation.

Facilitators should apply no pressure toward achieving reconciliation, but be content with small steps of acknowledgement, recognition, apology, and taking responsibility for one’s own behaviors. Reconciliation is a long process that takes place over many years and comes with continued testing of trust and understanding. The results of dialogue are always enhanced if participants have the opportunity to engage in joint projects. Mutual understanding is important, but actions speak louder than words. Joint action also models inter-faith cooperation to the broader community.

Dialogue avoids:

- Predictable debates on contentious issues

Dialogue invites:

- Genuine inquiry
- Developing the discipline to hear perspectives very different from one’s own
- Expanding one’s capacity for tolerance
- Participants to be changed by the process

Dialogue develops:

- A deepening of human relationships
- New insights and understanding through tolerating difference
- New and unexpected responses to complex problems

**Training Activity**

**Objective:**

To help group members understand the unique value of dialogue and to feel reassured that the risks of dialogue lead to positive outcomes.
**Fig. 9: Debate versus Dialogue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEBATE</th>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal is to win</td>
<td>Goal is to discover common ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves listening to find the opponent’s weak points</td>
<td>Involves listening to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves criticizing other points of view</td>
<td>Involves openly considering all points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes one right answer to a question or problem</td>
<td>Assumes that many different ideas can contribute to a fuller solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comes from a position which one defends</td>
<td>Expresses feelings, concerns, fears, and uncertainties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposes faults in the positions of others</td>
<td>Demonstrates strengths on all sides of an issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective:**
To give participants an actual experience of these two forms of communication so that they can appreciate the distinction.

**Method:**
Before sharing this handout, divide participants into small groups, and assign them an issue that is controversial but not too sensitive. Within the group one half argues for the topic and one half against. After 5 minutes, stop the debate and ask the groups to switch to a dialogue. Bring participants back to plenary to reflect on the differing aims of debate and dialogue, and review handout.
3.6 Fostering Dialogue through Good Communication

The dialogue process is about practicing a new kind of speaking and a new kind of listening.

Active Listening: Hearing and understanding the truth of the experience of others

- Give the speaker your full and undivided attention
- Listen to learn, not to verify existing assumptions or expectations.
- Listen with empathy, to see the problem from the other person’s point of view, to walk in their shoes.
- Ask question to clarify or expand your understanding, not to challenge or engage in debate

3.7 Authentic Speaking: Telling the truth of your own experience

- Speak for yourself, not for a group or position
- Speak to communicate your own experience, not to persuade others
- Distinguish your opinion or belief from fact or ‘truth’
- Acknowledge the experiences and assumptions that have shaped your views and opinion
- Speak from your heart

3.8 Guidelines for Dialogues

Before beginning a dialogue, the group should establish guidelines. These will create and protect a safe space for honest communication. Group members should generate and, as much as possible, take responsibility for their own guidelines. The facilitator makes sure there is agreement,
the list is complete, and the guidelines are followed.

**Basic guidelines may include:**

- Respect differences in experience and perspective
- Speak as an individual, not as a representative of a group
- Speak truthfully and from your own experience
- Do not try to persuade or change others
- Listen openly, respectfully, and without interruption
- Allow time for those who are more quiet
- Honor confidentiality
- Avoid using negative stereotypes or generalizations
- Be willing to learn and be changed by the experience

### 3.9 Crafting Dialogue Questions

After some initial dialogue practice and the setting of ground rules, the core of a dialogue is launched with a question. The nature of the question and how it is phrased will profoundly affect the tone and shape of the ensuing dialogue.

A question designed for a debate helps to sharpen and differentiate positions. A question designed for a dialogue will allow for difference, but also helps illuminate unexplored common ground. A good dialogue question:

- Is open-ended and cannot be answered with a yes or no, I agree or disagree, response
- Takes participants deeper than the level of opinion or position.
- Encourages participants to delve into their experience and to explore their thinking in a fresh manner
- Allows for ambiguity or ambivalence
- Calls forth new, unrehearsed responses

Depending on the time allotted, there can be a series of dialogue questions, each building upon the last.

### 3.10 Phases of Dialogue

#### 1. Opening Phase

**Goal:** Build trust and safety

- Establish ground rules
- Find common ground
- Surface expectations
- Practice communication skills

**Challenges:** Inadequate trust may lead to:

- Superficiality
- Reverting to debate, argument, or problem solving
2. Heart of the Dialogue

Goal: Reach new understanding of self and other in relation to a conflict or tension. Focus dialogue with carefully crafted questions

- Encourage expression of personal feeling and experience
- Allow participants to tell relevant aspects of own story
- Cultivate the kind of listening that enables participants to develop new understandings of different perspectives
- Provide opportunity for personal reflection

3. Closing Phase

Goal: Consolidate learning and experience

- Engage head, heart, and hand in integrating experience of dialogue
- Articulate new vision and insight
- Plan how to put new learning into action
- Evaluation of dialogue process
- Prepare for re-entry into own community

Challenges: Incomplete consolidation may lead to:

- Pressure to conform to group decisions
- Move toward actions that are unrealistic or premature
- Too many ideas/loss of focus

3.11 The Essentials of Dialogue

Facilitation

The main responsibility of a facilitator is to create, protect, and maintain a safe space for open communication throughout the phases of a dialogue or workshop.

This can be achieved by attending to the following:

1. Setting the stage

- Clarify purpose of workshop or dialogue
- Describe agenda and time schedule

2. Establish and monitor ground rules

- Help group to develop and follow ground rules
- Model observance of ground rules through own behavior

3. Model effective group behavior and communication

- Respect all perspectives
- Provide verbal and non-verbal support
- Listen actively and empathetically
- Learn and use participants’ names
- Encourage hesitant members
- Work smoothly with co-facilitator
4. Oversee Process

- Manage the time; monitor individual speaking time and the overall schedule
- Keep group focused on the topic
- Encourage full participation
- Attend to stages of group process and what is needed in each stage
- Monitor emotional tone; challenge if too safe/protect if too intense
- Watch for power dynamics within group; prevent dominance of a single view or faction

For optimal management of the process, we recommend working with a co-facilitator, ideally in a bi-communal pair.
MODULE FOUR: INTERVENTIONS TO INTERFAITH CONFLICTS

Objective:
By the end of this topic, the participant should be able to:

- Meaning of interfaith dialogue
- Meaning of mentorship in interreligious dialogue
- Importance of mentorship and mediation.
- Conditions for interfaith dialogue and possibilities for women’s participation.

4.1 Understanding the Actors and Approaches to Peacebuilding

The first models and exercises in this section explore how inter-faith peacebuilding efforts can operate strategically for maximum influence. This section also includes practical skill building exercises for resolving community conflicts.
4.2 What is interfaith dialogue?

Interfaith dialogue involves people of different religious faiths coming together to have a conversation.

Training Activity

Facilitation process

**Step 1:**

01. In pairs ask the participants to brainstorm on what are the role of women interreligious dialogue (Encourage the participants to brainstorm women role in interreligious or inter-faith dialogue).

02. Invite them to share what they discussed as you list them on the flip chart

03. Invite the participants to reflect gender inequality, status of women and religions.

**Objective:**

To understand the influence religious leaders can have at various levels of society

**Method:**

Draw the triangle with its three sections on a flip chart. Ask participants where they would place themselves. Note if participants are operating at the middle level they can influence the grassroots through inter-faith awareness sessions and joint projects. They can strengthen cooperation among themselves through inter-faith dialogues and councils. They can influence the leadership through advocacy. The impact of inter-faith work is increased through strategic horizontal and vertical linkages.
At a time when differences often lead to friction, and friction leads to conflict, the search for peaceful ways of resolving differences and conflicts has become imperative. In this regard, we must all of us believe that the significance of mediation as an instrument to resolve differences and to find common ground cannot be overstated.

The importance of the peaceful resolution of differences becomes even more evident when we look at the reality of the world where we live in today. While poverty, illiteracy, disease, and injustice still present the most difficult challenges to humanity, we are also presented with the fact that violent conflicts and even wars continue to be the most devastating source of human suffering.

History has shown us that violent conflict and war are the worst enemies of mankind. History also teaches us how violent conflict and war destroy not only communities and nations, but also civilizations.

It is indeed disheartening to see that conflict remains a defining characteristic of today's world. War, which we thought to be obsolete, continues to serve as an instrument by which nations resolve their differences.

Thus, we should do our best to renounce the use of force and war as a means of conflict resolution. Through war, humankind would accomplish nothing but misery. The use of force will never resolve differences. The use of violence will only breed more violence.

Differences be they religious, ethnic, cultural, or even civilizational, will continue to be a fact of life. But these differences should by no means become a reason why we cannot live in harmony and peace. In fact, Islam reminds us that God placed us in different nations and tribes so that we might come to enhance mutual understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation (Qur'an 49:13). Therefore, perpetuating those differences to foment conflict is certainly against God's law of nature.

Our main task is therefore to ensure that religion continues to serve as the basis of peace. We must continue to work to ensure that religion will not be used, misused, and abused to justify acts of violence in any forms. The Holy Qur'an strongly reminds us that whoever killed a person without justified reason is he that has killed all mankind and humanity (5:32).

When conflicts do occur, it is our task to ensure that they are resolved peacefully, not with violence. Here, we believe in the power of dialogue, and that interfaith dialogue could take the form of mediation between conflicting parties. It is true that sometimes conflicts have no religious motive, as religion is only used as a means of justification, yet religious approaches to conflict resolution are often fruitful.

It is imperative that more of these dialogues are needed. More exchanges of views and discussions among civilizations should be encouraged. Therefore, we should continue to make the dialogue among civilizations useful both at the elite and grassroots levels. We should ensure that various activities to bridge the gap among civilizations would contribute to the enhancement of mutual understanding and respect in a concrete way.

Mediation through interfaith dialogues would not be meaningful unless parties to such dialogues were able to articulate their point of view in a frank and candid manner. Dialogues would quickly turn into a political theater if we were unable to be honest with each other. Fruitful dialogues can only be achieved in an environment that promotes candidness and honesty within a spirit of togetherness and brotherhood.

Faith leaders like Imams and church leaders whenever should play a role in mediation efforts to resolve interreligious conflict and promote religious literacy. They have played, and will continue to play, that role at the community level. They must also play that role to bridge differences among communities at the national level.

The challenge we are now facing is how to continue emphasizing the value of mediation through interfaith dialogues and cooperation as an instrument to bridge religious divides and conflicts at the local level.

Various initiatives in this area remind us that religion and religious leaders do have a positive role to play in peace and co-existence of the communities.

Religion does serve as a source of values and norms that can provide guidance for healthy inter-state relations based on mutual understanding, mutual respect, and equality. Those dialogues also serve as a venue for religious leaders to articulate their aspirations for a peaceful and just society. At the grassroots level, interfaith dialogues and cooperation
can provide the basis for peace among people of different faiths. Dialogues can remove mutual suspicions, which often result from ignorance, lack of knowledge about each other, and an absence of mutual respect.

4.3 What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is well established in the business world. But not at all in dialogue, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. For example, there are workshops, seminars, and round tables. But these are not mentoring.

Mentoring is different. A mentor is not a teacher, counsellor, or trainer. A mentor is not an omniscient advisor. A mentor does not give advice, but is part of a trusted relationship, where there is give and take, a flow between the mentor and individual or group.

Activity 2: Read the story below and reflect on:

What things did Harry do wrong as a mentor to Christina?

Harry has had an exciting career spanning over 10 years in conflict resolution outside his country, and as a gender expert, his services have been sought after by many international and local organizations as a consultant. He was recently appointed by the government of Atlantis to serve in the Commission for the Restoration of Peace in the southern part of the country owing to ongoing war between communities in the country. While in this commission, he meets Christina who is a grassroots youth leader working for conflict transformation in the region, and Christina requests Harry to be her mentor.

After two meetings with Christina, Harry goes on to develop a simple plan for Christina to employ at the grassroots level together with her team in order to keep the youth involved in other activities and stop their engagement in cattle rustling. On the other hand, the national government has developed a peace accord, in which the local youth demanded that action be taken against the neighboring communities that were invading their territory but no action was ever taken against them. After a month, Christina comes back to Harry and expresses disappointment that all efforts seem to be hitting a dead end. Harry suggests buying more time to see how the situation goes, banking on the fact that the solutions he suggested have worked elsewhere in his vast experience. In this process, Christina feels overwhelmed and feels inexperienced and just takes what the mentor advises, though the mentor does not enquire much from Christina. On the scheduled fourth meeting, Christina does not show up for the mentorship session with Harry. Harry is disappointed and feels disgruntled and argues that Christina should have been very happy and grateful to be meeting him for their discussion.

4.4 Mentoring Priorities

The following are the 4 priorities for mentoring:

a). Mentor, and leaders of all sorts, cannot operate based on existing experiences. The mentor does not rest on his past successes. He or she must learn from an emerging future. It might be argued that learning from the emerging future is a strange way to proceed, even wrong: since, all we have is the past to guide us. But that is not so. The future is here and now. There are emerging possibilities for the future. The mentor needs to be wise enough to recognize how the future beckons, not least because the future is in the hands of the younger generation, and in even the bleakest and most violent situations there can be hints, glimmers of new life being possible. The mentor must recognize these new possibilities and, however fragile, be a passionate encourager.

b). We are living on a threshold facing a time of uncertainty and confusion in our societies today. The forced movement of peoples, and war and conflicts being apparently impossible to resolve is now commonplace. The mentor will summon all his or her experience and wisdom to help, where invited, to help people in conflict let go of old realities and then embrace new ones. The mentor will need to assist in helping to let go of the old order, allowing for the new to emerge. Letting go is not as easy as it sounds.

c). The mentor needs to be aware that there are other ways of knowing, besides what can be measured, other than by the culture of ‘targets’, as represented by the market economy, which regulates our existence, especially in the West. Another way of knowing lies in the imagination. The imagination is the capacity in all of us to bring to birth something new, beautiful, and good out of the mess we find
ourselves in. It is always a moral imagination. This is not fantasy or day dreaming, but an imagination which honors the stranger, and the dispossessed, particularly in the work of peace-making the face of the enemy. The mentor needs to recognize that primacy of the imagination which directly challenges the current market-based notion of what a human being is. The consultant or business mentor works within a narrow framework. His or her task is to ensure the high profitability of their company, and whatever else it may aspire to, in terms of, say, its corporate responsibility. A person in these settings is defined by what he or she produces. Work is a measurable quantity, with concrete results: a material.

But when the imagination is called on, through the arts or religion at its best, it breaks these materialistic perceptions of reality and opens onto other and more hopeful dimensions. We are capable of acts of goodness and heroism, as well as of a capacity to muck everything up. This mix of the noble and the wicked leaves the one-dimensional understanding of humanity, as a cog, a dot, a number, a client, a patient, far behind. Would-be mentors need to understand the power of the creativity in each of us, and to learn to harness it for their lives and mentoring. Each will do this in their own way.

d). Lastly the mentor recognizes the need for reflexional for thinking about, and mulling over, the experiences that those who he or she is working with choose to speak about. This takes time and no mentor should be tempted to hurry on to the next thing. This is difficult, because funders want to be assured that what they are supporting will ‘make a difference’ quickly and noticeably. But move on too quickly, and nothing will change. The mentor must recognize this, and recognize too that dialogue, when it gets beyond generalities, of any sort, brings risk.

There is an uncertainty about dialogue and peacebuilding. Many of our friends in Bosnia found it difficult to take steps towards a more hopeful future, and they do not see religious leaders helping them to find that courage. We speak a lot about hope. We are in some way’s prisoners of hope, and if there is anything more frightening, riskier than terror, it is hope.

### Step 2

Engage the participants in a role play,

1. Ask the participants to sit in a circle and assume the role of imams,
2. Pick two participants from the group, one man and a lady, assuming one to be a victim of domestic violence and the other perpetrator,
3. Ask them sit at the center of the circle as the religious leaders try to solve the issue,
4. Observe this dialogue as they reconcile the two.

At the end of the exercise, let the participants discuss the approach and the values portrayed in the mediation process.

### 4.5 Intervention Check List

1. **Know Your Place in the System**
   - Inside Partial or Outside Neutral
   - Advocate, bridge builder, or skills trainer

2. **Do No Harm**
   - Consider how your activities might increase tensions, put people at risk, or otherwise add to the conflict situation

3. **Define Your Focus**
   - Know the intention of your intervention, how it will build inter-faith understanding and cooperation, what it will add or change in the life of the community or region
4. Build for Sustainability

- Build Capacity – skills and wisdom
- Build Relationships – individually, inter-faith, inter-organization, etc.
- Build Institutions – develop inter-faith infrastructure: joint councils, alliances, networks
- Build Evaluation Mechanisms – document best practices and lessons learned; and disseminate

4.6 What Underlies Positions:

Fig. 11: The Onion Model

Training Activity

**Objective:**

To learn to differentiate between positions, interests and needs.

**Method:**

Draw the onion model on a flip chart and use an example to demonstrate the difference between positions, interests and needs. Explain that conflicts can never be constructively solved at the level of positions, which are almost always in opposition; conflicts are usually solved by negotiating between interests. Basic needs cannot be negotiated away.

Variation: Ask some members of the group to develop a role-play depicting a typical community conflict. The rest of the group divides into four groups. Group #1 notes the positions of each party, Group #2 the interests of each party, Group #3 the needs of each party and the Group #4 observes the patterns of escalation of the conflict. After the role-play, each group discusses among themselves what they observed. The role-play actors meet and discuss how the conflict would have gone differently if the basic needs and interests of each actor had been understood. The observations of all groups are then shared in the larger group.
4.7 Steps for Resolving Community Conflicts

1. Acknowledge the Conflict
Each party must recognize or admit they are in conflict. If one of the parties is denying that there is a conflict, then there can be no progress on mutual resolution.

   **Mediators:** Acknowledge conflict resolution is difficult and can take time. Address reasons for denial. Be patient.

2. Agree to Try to Resolve
Accomplishing this step requires some trust; both parties must believe they are better off in dialogue than in debate; both must have some sense that a win-win outcome is possible; and most importantly both must want to resolve the conflict.

   **Mediators:** Ask each party to join the effort. Don’t push someone into agreement. If a party resists, remind them that it is their choice whether to remain in conflict or to look for a mutually satisfactory solution.

3. Each Party Tells Their Story
Both parties take turns explaining what has happened from their point of view. This can take time, if people have strong feelings. It is an opportunity to understand each other.

   **Mediators:** Make sure this is a safe process. Stick to dealing with only one conflict at a time, preferably the original one. Get parties to agree to firm ground rules. Keep encouraging active listening. Go past positions into interests. Do not move on until the parties involved understand each other well.

4. Brainstorm Solutions
The parties list all the solutions they can think of. All ideas are written down, no matter how inadequate or far-fetched they seem.

   **Mediators:** Keep ideas flowing. Be encouraging. Make a list. No idea should be dismissed at this stage.

5. Choose Solutions
The parties decide together which solutions to try out. Either side can veto an idea. Throw out the unacceptable ones. Refine the best ones. Design an implementation plan for solutions that includes: who does what, how they are held accountable, and a time frame for checking back to see how the solution is working.

   **Mediators:** Watch for impractical plans. Encourage parties to work together on this step. Write down agreements if necessary

6. Implement Solutions
Both parties must follow through on their responsibilities. Keep working on trust, as that will set a good foundation for resolving future conflicts. If the agreement falls apart, cycle back to the beginning of the process.

Training Activity

**Objective:**
To learn basic steps for conflict resolution
4.8 Principles for Mediators

These principles are relevant whenever religious leaders are asked to assist in resolving a conflict or de-escalating inter-group tensions.

**Be objective** - validate both sides, even if privately you favor one point of view, or even when only one party is present.

**Be supportive** - use caring language, demonstrating that you are interested in the concerns of all sides. Provide a trusting environment, where people feel safe to open up.

**Be non-judging** - actively discourage judgments about who was right and who was wrong. Don’t ask “Why did you?” Ask “What happened?” and “How do you feel?”

**Use open-ended questions** - encourage suggestions from participants. Resist advising. If necessary, offer options, not directives.

**Use a win/win approach** - work towards wins for both sides. Turn opponents into problem-solving partners.

Method:

Go over each step in the large group, emphasizing the importance of completing one step before moving onto the next. A rush to solutions will produce unsatisfactory results. Divide into groups of 6 – 7 to practice. Three or four participants in each group develop a role-play of a conflict. Two participants act as mediators, moving through the 6 steps as outlined, and one participant acts as an observer. The mediators should let the conflict unfold for at least 5 – 10 minutes before offering their assistance. Once the mediators start the process, the observer may call for a “timeout” once or twice to offer feedback to the mediators. At the end of the exercise, role players, mediators, and observers report back to the large group as to what worked well and what posed challenges. The facilitators can derive further lessons about conflict resolution from these reports.
INTERVENTIONS TO INTERFAITH CONFLICTS

5.1 Introduction

As defined in chapter 2, interreligious dialogue is defined as the people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, (i.e. “faiths”) at both the individual and institutional level.

Interfaith dialogue can play an indispensable role in limiting, if not preventing, many mass atrocities which are fueled by pernicious portraits of the Other. Genuine interfaith dialogue seeks to remove such barriers, identifying potential areas of understanding and commonality without undermining true distinctiveness and difference. Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example, between neighbors, in schools and in places of work; it can take place in both formal and informal settings.
Facilitation process

5.2 Women rights from religious perspective

Human rights are considered to be the rights of the people just by virtue of being human. Primarily, the procedural sense of human rights is about creating and maintaining the space for individuals and groups to achieve justice, personal security, wellbeing, general political stability, economic development and so forth. The basic elements of human rights are equality, freedom, universality, tolerance and peaceful coexistence of the people.

In Islam, Shariah (Islamic law) is the basis of its concept of rights and duties. Abdullahi An Naim terms Shariah as the historically conditioned human understanding of Islam. It is not Islam in its totality, the primary sources of Islamic law are the Quran (Holy Book) and Sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad; and secondary sources, Ijma (consensus of opinion of jurist), Qiyas (analogical reasoning) and Ijtihad (independent reasoning).

5.2.1 Rights of women in Islam

In Islam, although the inherent dignity of all human beings (which calls for worth and value of each human) has been respected, the concept of equality of sexes, and social and political equality of Muslim is well articulated and spiritual equality of sexes has been recognized in Islam. This is due to the recognition by classical Muslim jurisprudence of the essential inequality of men and women and division of rights of women into different categories as wife, mother and daughter instead of women’s rights as a whole, while non-Muslim have been given the protected status of Dhimmi. The following are the rights for women in Islamic perspective:
Rights of a woman in Islamic Sharia:

- Public Rights.
- Right of Life.
- Right of Education.
- Right of Equality

Special Rights.

- Rights as a mother, daughter and sister.
- Rights as a life-partner (wife)
- Rights as a divorced and widowed
- Rights as a neighbor

Aspects of equality of women in Islam.

- Equality in rights and duties Some other instances of equality of between man and woman in Islam are:
  - Equality at the origin of creation.
  - Equality in the field of liability and penalty.
  - Equality in civil matters
  - Equality in the public rights.

Human and Civil Rights of Woman:

Islam has also determined human and civil rights of woman as under:

- Right of equality in creation.
- Right of equality in succession in domestic affairs.
- Right of equality in human values.
- Equality in responsibility and rewards.
- Equality of life and care in family.
- Equality in rights and duties.
- Equality in the pursuit of knowledge

Social and Marital Rights of Woman:

Among the prominent social rights mandated by Islam to women include:

- Right to choose a life partner.
- Right to the dowry and ownership.
- Right at the earnings of the spouse.
- Right to claim divorce.
- Right in the foster

Political Rights of Woman:

The political status of Umul-Almomineen Hazrat Aisha is not hidden to anyone. She is truly a role model for any political leader. For example, when she stood on the side of opponents of Hazrat Ali bin Abi Talib after the martyr of the third Caliph, Hazrat Uthman-bin-Affan, she led the people on her side in an efficient political way. Some biased people who are guided by personal interests propagate that Islam has forced the woman to be imprisoned at home and not to go out except to the grave! Has that verdict a true basis in the Quran or in the Sunna (prophetic traditions) or in the history of Muslim women in the first three centuries.
The Quran makes the man and woman partners in bearing the heaviest responsibilities in Islamic life, and that is the responsibility of enjoining the right and forbidding the evil. The Almighty says: “The believers, men and women, are “Auliya,” (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another, they enjoin (on the people) Al-Maaruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid people from Al-Munkar (i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden); they offer their prayers perfectly Iqamat-as-Salat and give the Zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger”. (Surah 9:71). As an example of the application of that principle, it happened that there was a woman in the mosque who disagreed with the caliph ‘Umar Al-Faruq (“The One Who Distinguishes Truth from Falsehood”, i.e. ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab) while he was addressing the congregation from the pulpit. He accepted her opinion and discarded his, saying openly, “A woman is correct and ‘Umar is wrong. (Mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his interpretation, improving its authority, as mentioned earlier). The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim. [Transmitted by Ibn Majah, part 1, (224), on the authority of Anas, corrected by Al-Seyoti in ancient times, and by Al-Albany in modern times.

The Muslim scholars agree that a Muslim woman is also included in the meaning of the Hadith, as she is obliged to know what corrects her creed, improves her worship, and controls her manners within the morals of Islam, etc. She is obliged to know Allah’s laws about what is allowed, what is forbidden, and her rights and duties. She could reach the highest stage of knowledge to achieve the grade of ijtihad (independent judgement of religious matters).

We may summarize the political rights of woman in Islam as:

- Right to advise the guardian.
- Right to advise the ruler.
- Right to denounce the unjust rule
- Right to shelter
- Right to monitor current events
- Right to claim her political rights and defend them.
- Judicial Rights.
- Right to pledge allegiance
- Right to participate in Jihad


Islam has bestowed a Muslim woman such financial and economic rights, which no other society, culture or religion bestowed to her. Islam has given equal rights to Muslim male and female to possess, mortgage and perform all types of contracts. She has sole right of her possession and men in any relation or in any form cannot interfere her rights. Therefore, a Muslim woman can perform her financial and economic affairs without any hindrance and restriction. She can dispose of her funds with full discretion. She has the right to sell, purchase, lease and entrepreneurship, speculation and other financial contracts as well as donation, charity, devotion and dedication which are performed to seek the will of Almighty Allah. Most prominent financial rights recognized by Islam for Women are outlined as under:

- Economic eligibility.
- Right to work according to Islamic guidelines.
- The right to alimony, dowry.
- The right to inheritance.
There are various other manifold rights of woman that are granted by Islam. One cannot be fully capable to elaborate these rights here in writing. But today, the so-called torch bearer of modern civilization wants to take woman to the pre-Islamic condition and culture which were the society of stagnant and deprivation. These are intellectually deviated or unaware of the vision of Islam, they consider a woman just a commodity by which woman has become a marketable and they are promoting their trade through the advertisement of women. They reduce the role and importance of women given by Islam and interpret and present the wrong picture of the rights of women given by Islam.

### 5.2.2 Women and Christianity

Women were regarded by Jesus as equal to men even in the question of divorce. Among the striking features of Jesus’ teaching on divorce is that he takes the woman and the man as being on the same footing (Mark 10:11-12). And again, there is not a negative thing said about women, nor is there any hint of a hierarchical relationship between men and women in marriage.

But this is true not merely of Jesus. As you look at the early church, there are many examples where women were, in fact, engaged in significant ministries in the church, even in the roles of leadership. For example, it is very clear from 1 Corinthians 11 and from Acts 21:9 that women prayed and prophesied in the early church. Without entering into a long discussion on the meaning of “prophecy,” we may assume that it at least includes what we know as “preaching” today.

It may be more than that; but it is at least that. It is very clear, then, that women in the early church did lead in public prayer and did prophesy; otherwise Paul would not be concerned about their wearing veils, which was a symbol of their authority to do this (1 Cor 11:10).

Again, you find women sharing in the deaconate in the early church. Paul in Romans 16:1-2 mentions his good friend Phoebe, who is called “a deacon.” Translations tend to call her a “deaconess” or simply a “servant” of the church: the word used is the same word that is translated elsewhere “deacon”; and it is the same word that is normally translated in the New Testament as “minister.” It is linked with the foundation idea of what it means to be a minister of Jesus Christ (cf., Mark 10:45). Paul also speaks of Phoebe’s being a “helper” in the church (Greek prostatis, better translated “guardian” or “protector”), and that again is a word implying a position of leadership in the early church. (Other texts that speak of women sharing the deaconate are 1 Timothy 3:11, 1 Timothy 5:3-16 and Titus 2:3.)

Jesus in all his words and deeds left us an example to treat women as equals with men, never subordinated or restricted in role (Matt 12:49–50; 15:38; 25:31–46; Mark 3:34–35; Luke 8:21; 11:27–28). His treatment of women as equals defied the judicial, social, and religious customs of his day. On judicial matters where women’s rights were curtailed, such as regarding adultery and divorce, he treated men and women equally. In a society that regarded women as less intelligent and less moral than men, Jesus respected women’s intelligence and spiritual capacity, as is evident in the great spiritual truths he originally taught to women such as the Samaritan woman (John 4:10–26) and Martha (John 11:25–26).
In a culture that frowned upon the religious education of women, Jesus encouraged women to be his disciples. For example, when Mary “sat at the Lord’s feet listening,” the posture and position of a disciple, Jesus affirmed her: “Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38–42). It is generally agreed that disciples in Jesus’s day were trained to carry on a rabbi’s teachings, typically becoming teachers themselves, and the rabbis’ disciples were always male. Jesus teaching both men and women disciples implies that he wanted women as well as men to be religious teachers.

5.2.3 Women and the African traditional religion (Kaya Elders)

African traditional religion women play subordinate roles within the central communal cults of traditional African religions, they frequently have important roles in personal rituals of status transformation associated with birth, puberty, and death. From the perspective of women’s ritual and secular roles, the most important status transforming rituals are concerned with the transformation of a girl into a nubile maiden.

In Kaya traditional religion women like Mekatilili wa menza, arose as a powerful voice expressing resistance to labor recruitment and demanding the return to traditional government and old customs. She was an effective and emotional public speaker, as she began to publicize the injustices she felt, she found many Griama who agreed with her.

Mekatilili wa Menza may have been in the freedom struggle scene for a short time, but her contribution in raising the African consciousness among the Giriama people of the Coastal Kenya was immense.

Mekatilili was one of the first women in Kenya to rise up against the British in 1913. Her bravery, oratorical power and charisma earned her a huge following and saw her mobilize the Giriama to take oaths and offer sacrifices to restore their sovereignty.

Initially, her concern was the breakdown of the Giriama culture amid British influence and she pushed for a return to the traditional Giriama governance system. By extension, it created resistance to the authority of the British and the appointed headmen, the latter whom she accused of betraying the Giriama for rewards.

Mekatilili was particularly against the issue of labor recruitment. At the time, the British were putting increasing economic pressure on the Giriama, through taxation, attempts to control trade in palm wine and ivory, and by the recruitment of young men to work on plantations and public works projects.

Mekatilili anguish was over the growing disintegration of the Giriama, so she called upon her people to save their sons and daughters from getting lost in the British ways. While her rebellion lasted for only one year, from 1913 to 1914, it had considerable impact on the relations between the British and the locals.

The British won the war against the Giriama, who were forced into a stringent peace settlement. But, in the long term, the British government removed land restrictions and lightened labor demands. The Giriama achieved the main goals for which they had originally fought in the longer term, but the virtual withdrawal of the colonial administration from the Giriama hinterland may have contributed to its isolation and economic stagnation to date.
Born in the 1840s, Mekatilili was the only daughter in a poor family of five children. Historians attribute her strong feelings on the issue of labor to a personal tragedy, in that one of her brothers

Mekatilili as ATR woman brought together divergent stands and was a woman who rejected accepted gendered norms and advocated for the rights of children and the youth at the same time acted as a champion of Mijikenda women empowerment and cultural rights.

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