RELIGION AND PEACE IN EAST AFRICA

PILOT STUDY ON METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND TOOLS FOR MEASURING CHANGE AND THE RESULTS OF WORKING WITH RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS ACTORS FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
ABSTRACT

Religion is and will continue to be a component capable of initiating either violent conflicts or peace around the globe. In this light, it is important to include and engage religion and religious actors in measures aimed at mitigating conflicts and creating sustainable peace resolution mechanisms. Indeed, interreligious dialogue has, significantly, become a common response to various conflicts, religious strife and religious nationalism. This has seen the emergence of a different approach, grounded in interreligious dialogue programmes aimed at promoting acceptance and encouraging peaceful coexistence between people from different religious communities. The objective of this study is to identify different levels of engagement among interreligious dialogue (IRD) players; identify gaps and improve tools for measuring IRD interventions in East Africa; provide different categories of indicators for IRD and identify the potential and limitations of IRD players in East Africa in order to contribute to peaceful coexistence and prevention of conflict.

Keywords: Interreligious Dialogue, Peace, Theory of Change, Measurement, Tools.
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<tr>
<td>AACC</td>
<td>All African Council of Churches</td>
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<td>AGEH</td>
<td>Association of Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>CCMRE</td>
<td>Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Eastleigh</td>
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<td>CICC</td>
<td>Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics</td>
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<td>CJPC</td>
<td>Catholic Justice and Peace Commission</td>
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<td>CPS</td>
<td>Civil Peace Service</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>ECJP</td>
<td>Ecumenical Centre for Justice and Peace</td>
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<td>EIFDDA</td>
<td>Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action</td>
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<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith-Based Organization</td>
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<td>FECCLAHA</td>
<td>The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa</td>
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<td>INTERDIP</td>
<td>Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue Programme</td>
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<td>IRCE</td>
<td>Interreligious Council of Ethiopia</td>
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<td>IRCK</td>
<td>Interreligious Council of Kenya</td>
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<td>IRD</td>
<td>Interreligious Dialogue</td>
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<td>KECOSCE</td>
<td>Kenya Community Support Centre</td>
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<td>KMYA</td>
<td>Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance</td>
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<td>NCCK</td>
<td>National Christian Council of Churches of Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUHURI</td>
<td>Muslims for Human Rights</td>
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<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity (later African Union)</td>
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<td>PROCMURA</td>
<td>Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>ZANZIC</td>
<td>Zanzibar Interfaith Cent</td>
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All views expressed in this report are solely the views of the consultants and do not necessarily reflect the views of Danmission.

Fr. Willybard Lagho and Annan Bonaya
2016
1. INTRODUCTION

With these words, Hans Küng, president of the Global Ethic Foundation, highlighted the importance of religion in peacebuilding since it plays a critical role in socio-political and economic development within and among nations (Küng, H., & Kuschel, K. J. (Eds.), 1993). It is important to acknowledge the fact that religion has and will continue to play a significant role in development and conflict as well as in peacebuilding.

Religion plays a vital role in the lives and cultures of at least 75 percent of the world’s population. Religious values and practices are often deeply entwined in the fabric of daily lives, and the leaders of churches, mosques, temples and other religious communities can potentially play a powerful role in shaping attitudes, opinions and behaviour – in changing countries. Religious teachings can similarly provide justification for either extreme action or peace.

In the newly adopted UN Sustainable Development Goals, peace is of critical importance for the success of the 2030 Agenda. As stated in the document; Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “… there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”. Religious actors and communities are identified as crucial in reaching the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals and in fostering peace under SDG Goal 16.

Indeed, religious persons and faith-based organizations (FBOs), as carriers of religious ideas, can and do play important roles. They are not only a source of conflict but are also tools for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Religious agents do this by providing early warnings of conflict, visible presence and management when a conflict has erupted, and by contributing to advocacy, reconciliation and mediation (Sommers, 2001).

In East Africa, especially along the coastline from Somalia to Mozambique, religion plays a very significant role in the field of peace and conflict, and religion for peace programs have taken various forms, mainly interreligious activities with a focus on promoting reconciliation and peace. The engagement of different religious communities ensures that each group can contribute to a common cause of peaceful coexistence. Religious leaders, through interreligious dialogue, play an important role in creating an avenue that serves as motivation and guidance to citizens from different faith groups to embrace non-violent means of conflict resolution. A number of regional, national and global authorities are currently engaging with religious players in order to enhance the much-needed synergy in peacebuilding initiatives in society. For example, several Danish development organizations are working with one or another form of interreligious dialogue partner across the religious divide in Africa, Asia and the Middle East to prevent conflicts and/or strengthen peaceful coexistence in society.

One of the recurring challenges, however, is the lack of measurement tools to quantify the results of this particular work. It is crucial, therefore, for implementing organizations as well as for donors, that they indicate what kind of change their programs are aimed at achieving in order to facilitate its measurement. To close or narrow the lack of measurement of IRD peace projects, Danmission commissioned a study that was carried out by independent consultants aimed at shedding light on the actual situation of such gaps in interreligious dialogue for reconciliation and peace in East Africa.
The study was aimed at helping to bring about realism with regard to the potential and limitations of religious agents in East Africa to contribute to peaceful coexistence and prevention of conflict and to help us to gain an understanding of the different levels of engagement. Furthermore, the study was also aimed at providing a fuller description of the categories of indicators for IRD. Lastly, the study hoped to include a proposal to compare different approaches used in IRD and contribute to a further qualification of the added value of the organizations working in this field as well as increased learning about useful measuring instruments (ToR, 2015.) Against this backdrop, the results and findings were analysed and categorized to reflect these aims, grouping them into four focus areas, each represented in the following chapters:

i. Organizations working with IRD in East Africa
ii. Characteristics of the IRD landscape in East Africa (Annex 2 is closely related, presenting “Examples of different IRD models in East Africa”)
iii. Gaps and tools for measuring IRD intervention in East Africa
iv. Potential and limitations of IRD players in peaceful coexistence and prevention of conflict

Against this backdrop, the overall objective of the study is to provide a picture of the gaps in measuring interreligious dialogue (IRD) and propose ways to target those gaps. The study will also help to bring about realism as to the potential and limitations of religious agents in East Africa to contribute to peaceful coexistence and prevention of conflict, and help various actors gain an understanding of the different levels of engagement, different approaches used in IRD and possible parameters for measurement.

In respect of these objectives, the study is structured as follows: This Introductory chapter presents the rationale of the study. The first chapter deals with the characteristics of the organizations working with IRD. Chapter two analyse the broader landscape of IRD, both at organizational and conceptual level. Chapters one and two build up to chapter three, which is a presentation of seven critical gaps in the way organizations work with IRD and the way they measure their results. The chapter also provide tools for narrowing these gaps. Afterwards, in chapter four, the potential and limitations of IRD players in achieving peaceful coexistence and prevention of conflict are analysed, before the observations rendered from this study will be summarized, and the main conclusions and recommendations outlined in chapter five.

It is worth mentioning Annexes 2 and 3. Annex 2 outlines the findings of the research that has been done in Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. This annex is critical since it provides a detailed evaluation of, and highlights the myriad of IRD approaches utilized by, different organizations in East Africa. It also gives the background to the IRD landscape and the identified gaps in the measurement of IRD. Annex 3 describes in detail the methodological framework and includes an explanation of the data sources as well as how the data was collected.

1. Danmission concept note on religion and natural resources, Christina Dahl Jensen.
2. Fr. Willybard Lagho studied theology at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi before specializing in Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome. He is currently the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Mombasa and President of the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics in Mombasa, Kenya. Annan Bonaya is a freelance consultant based in Malindi, Kenya working in the field of development cooperation focusing on monitoring and evaluation.
2. ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH IRD

Interfaith peace interventions in East Africa are currently carried out by a number of organizations with distinctive characteristics in terms of whether IRD is their core or secondary business and how their theological and moral orientations influence their perceptions on social issues. The moral perceptions of Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) in terms of social issues such as gender equality and leadership, to take one example, are basically defined by the theological and moral orientation of the founding faith community. This explains why, for example, the CICC Board is made up exclusively of male members who represent their respective faith communities, where leadership at the highest level is exclusively male. Another category of peace interventions is undertaken by Civil Society Organizations (CSO) whose core business is not IRD and their moral perceptions on social issues such as gender equality, to take the same example, are basically defined by the moral principles of the State’s laws and local cultural values. Within the FBO category, there are three clusters of IRD interventions: first those undertaken by one single faith actor such as the Catholic Commission for Interreligious Dialogue or the Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance. The second cluster of FBOs’ peace interventions comprises those undertaken by ecumenical organizations whose core business is Christian unity and their moral perceptions on social issues such as gender equality reflects a more unified and progressive ethical position of transformative leadership, as characterized by ecumenical organizations in East Africa. Some good examples of ecumenical IRD organizations are the National Christian Council of Churches (NCCK) and the Ecumenical Centre for Justice and Peace in Kenya. The third cluster of FBOs’ peace interventions is formed of those undertaken by IRD-constituted organizations whose core business is IRD programs, as stated in their constitution. A good example is the CICC (Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics), IRCK (Interreligious Council of Kenya) and IRCE (Interreligious Council of Ethiopia). The CICC registration document, for example, clearly shows that CICC is an interreligious-based organization whose membership is drawn from the mainstream religions operating in the coastal region of Kenya, namely: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and African Indigenous Religion.

It is worth noting that FBO actors enjoy unmatched legitimacy within faith communities when compared to CSOs, right from the moment of designing, implementing and monitoring of peace intervention results. In times of conflict, for example, most victims in East Africa tend to seek refuge in churches and mosques. FBOs normally take the lead in providing humanitarian assistance, as well as peace and reconciliation initiatives, whereas the CSOs, exclusively dependent on external funding, are unable to react in the same swift manner. This was, for example, observed during the 1997 Kaya Bombo clashes in the Likoni area of Mombasa, Kenya.

A culture of collaboration needs to be developed between FBO and CSOs in order to enhance religious leaders’ capacity when addressing social issues such as gender equality and leadership, especially where a conflict antagonizes people of different religious beliefs. Although the core business of CSOs is not IRD, their programs can positively transform the limitations of FBO leaders, e.g. when CSOs undertake transformative leadership training as neutral facilitators. In communities where religious identities are strong, CSOs may however find it difficult to disseminate their messages, which touch upon a participant’s moral perceptions. To ensure optimum trickle-down effects in communications with faith communities, CSOs need to build closer relationship with FBOs.

From our study, we realized that that one cannot strictly compartmentalize an organization into a particular paradigm, whether theological, political, or peacebuilding, due to their multiplicity of approaches. Nevertheless, looking at their major initiatives, we can try to broadly categorize some of their specific initiatives into distinct interreligious dialogue approaches in order to assess the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the particular initiative.
In short, the characteristics of the organizations:

- **Two broad categories of organizations:**
  - Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); core business is not IRD and their moral perceptions on social issues are defined by the moral principles of the State laws and local cultural values.
  - Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs); their core or secondary business is IRD and the orientations influencing their perceptions on social issues are defined by the theological and moral orientation of the founding faith community.

- **Further, within the FBO category there are three clusters of IRD organizations:**
  - Single-faith organizations
  - Ecumenical organizations
  - Interreligious organizations

Having described some of the characteristics of the IRD organizations, the next chapter explains the characteristics of the organizational and conceptual landscape for IRD in which the actors work.
3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IRD LANDSCAPE

In order to understand and determine the nature of the various initiatives in East Africa, the consultants first sought to understand the social context and type of IRD players in East Africa and ascertained the following characteristics and IRD players. All countries targeted by this study, namely Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia, have a multi-religious population, where citizens respect different religious identities, on the one hand, but are also aware of their double, and even triple, belonging, which is not only desirable but even necessary for constructing positive multiple religious relationships (Cornille 2015, p.15).

The national culture of each country demonstrates high respect for the religious diversity and interreligious instruction in the national education curriculum is already taking place in some East African countries. Another characteristic of the East African region is that most of the IRD organizations are active and operational where social conflicts based on some form of social exclusion and marginalization are prominent. Such conflicts are sometimes perceived as religious conflicts and actually create religious suspicions and tensions. Attacks on places of worship and religious leaders in Kenya and Tanzania in recent times can be attributed to such religious perceptions of conflict and have increased suspicions, tensions and mutual intolerance between Christians and Muslims. In the interview with CICC staff, it was pointed out that it is the swift joint IRD peaceful interventions, through interfaith consultation and joint press releases, that have helped restore calm by encouraging believers to take pro-peace and inclusive actions at such moments. The suspicions and tensions generated by unpredictable conflicts normally require urgent IRD peaceful responses followed by planned peace initiatives aimed at healing the broken relationships, which is one of the peace indicators of IRD peace interventions.

The consultants noted that most of the IRD peace initiatives lacked a specific timeline for completion of their project. In general, most of the organizations have only limited, if any, monitoring and evaluation capacity. This does not, however, mean that they cannot be effective.

There is a general lack of definition of what qualifies an intervention as interfaith, and this is caused by an equally general lack of a strong, conceptual and theological background and training. Another general characteristic is a lack of relevant training or proportional balance among interfaith representatives who make decisions before undertaking strategic initiatives. The staff training in IRD organizations is biased towards conflict mitigation but lacks a theological and/or interreligious foundation.

The study also revealed that IRD peace initiatives run the risk of becoming channels for the financial benefit of individuals who simple use interreligious concepts and structures to ‘legitimize’ their initiative for personal gain. Important to mention here is the fact that organizations based in the northern hemisphere, including Christian organizations, are a major source of funding for interreligious initiatives in the East African region, although the scope of this study prevents any deeper investigation of this fact. On the issue of funding, one has to note that most of the initiatives in East Africa do not have a sustainable mechanism and tend to depend wholly on external financing. A critical statement made in Ethiopia suggested that only fifty per cent of external partners’ funding is allowed into the country, while the rest is expected from the local communities. Due to time limitations, the consultants were unable to investigate this statement in depth or determine the impact of such a regulation and who stands to gain from the practice. It is to be noted, however, that foreign donations are considered as having the potential to compromise the priorities of religious peace agents.
Most of the initiatives that have a high (political) or mid-level (social) focus do not trickle down to the grassroots. In many cases, religious leaders seem to be very open to dialogue when joining forums and conferences but, once they are back in their communities, they do not uphold this position consistently or ensure that acquired knowledge is transmitted to their followers.

Community-based peace approaches by IRD players show great potential, especially when they are linked to alternative solutions targeting participants’ socio-economic needs, which naturally creates a common goal (as demonstrated in ZANZIC income-generating or sports activities).

Indeed, it is worth mentioning that there is a growing supply of training institutions offering IRD-related peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as radicalization studies that understand the local context in East Africa. Despite such training opportunities, however, IRD staff in East Africa remained overstretched considering the frequency of conflicts, geographical size of operation and organizational resources. The study also revealed a general lack of coordination among IRD peacebuilding players, which tends to create barriers for mutual exchange of good practice such as in monitoring and evaluation, resulting in obvious duplication and resource wastage.

See Annex 2 for cases of good practice in models of interventions involving IRD and religious actors.

In short, the characteristics of the IRD landscape in East Africa:

- there is a limited monitoring and evaluation system, if indeed any at all
- there is generally a lack of definition of what qualifies an intervention as interfaith
- there is a lack of a conceptual and theological background
- there is a minimal number of interfaith representatives in some IRD organizations
- there is a lack of strategic thinking
- a high or middle-level focus does not always trickle down to the grassroots
- community-based approaches are very successful, especially when they are linked to other thematic areas (such as sports or economic empowerment)
- there are well-qualified staff members with competence in various fields but who lack training in a strong theological and/or interreligious background
- there are good local training opportunities BUT organizations are overstretched considering the geographical size of operation and organizational resources
- there is a general lack of coordination among IRD players
- there are no sustainable funding mechanisms
- Christian organizations have been a major source of funding

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3. CICC press statement on 30 August 2012 following riots in Mombasa after the killing of Sheik Aboud Rogo.
4. GAPS AND TOOLS FOR MEASURING IRD INTERVENTION

From this study, it was evident that monitoring and evaluation remain critical in determining the success and failure of any initiative. Assessing the impact of peacebuilding interventions is a difficult task given that IRD is a complex issue and a process often focused on developing more intangible, and longer-term outcomes. This complexity makes short-term monitoring and evaluation difficult.

As stated earlier, most of the organizations studied did not have an evaluation strategy or deliberate tools for data collection, but simply had a monitoring system embedded in the funding requirements. The monitoring systems observed in this study referred to basic qualitative ethnographic tradition, whether intended or unintended. Most of the respondents had an idea of achievement but did not have a clear framework in which to express this, nor a strategy for presenting the changes achieved.

In the following, attempts have been made to outline some of the identified gaps in measuring IRD interventions and aspects that have not been accorded a deeper analysis but which are vital for the East African region.

Each gap is described briefly and then followed by a tool, which provides questions. The questions can be used as indicators and should be asked and analyzed in order to measure a process, an approach or to evaluate an organization.

The questions should be understood as examples and all questions should be elaborated and extended before being applied.

GAP 1: THE NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS IMPACT

The findings on religion and peace actors identified two broad categories of organizations, namely Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSO): within the FBO category there are three clusters, namely: single faith organizations, ecumenical organizations and interreligious organizations.

Depending on the context, the nature of the organization can have a different impact on peace outcomes. This is especially the case when it comes to sensitive topics such as Islamic radicalization, where a program from a single faith organization, other than the Muslim tradition, will not be able to address the issue in the same manner as a Muslim-based organization, or an interreligious organization. Inevitably, some sensitive IRD topics are best addressed by interreligious leaders and staff with high credibility within the local/national society. The IRD credibility profile can have a great impact on peace work and should, therefore, be a part of evaluations as well as an organization’s own reflections.

4. Provide feedback for project implementation, performance and access to benefits by the target population, identify problems early on and propose solutions, evaluate the achievement of project objectives, promote participation, ownership and accountability and inform sector strategy.
The same goes for the composition of membership and leadership. Most respondents suggested that it would be impossible to call an organization interreligious if the organization did not reflect proportional interreligious demographics and characters in its decision-making boards. Furthermore, most of the so-called interreligious initiatives studied do not necessarily reflect an intentional IRD initiative but are instead reactive actions based on the contextual and demographic composition of a community. These are important issues that should be included as a category of measurement.

**TOOL 1:**
**ANALYZE CATEGORIES, COMPOSITION OF MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- Which category does the organization belong to? Can it have an effect?
- Is inter-faith action the core business of the organization?
- In which context is the organization operating, given the major faith and sensitive topics?
- How inclusive is the organization: staff, members, mission, vision and strategic objectives?
- Does the IRD program reflect a model, a structure, and leadership that is inclusive?

**GAP 2:**
**MEASURING HOW SUCCESS IS COMMUNICATED AND WHERE ADVOCACY TAKES PLACE**

Most IRD programs in the study did not have a defined communication strategy capable of articulating their progress externally, although it was mentioned as one of the factors of success. A successful IRD program is circumscribed by an advocacy system and efficient communication of results. This communication strategy is also two-tier i.e. internal and external. An internal strategy aims to convince members of the message of the initiative. Internal communication can be built through prayer rallies or social activities e.g. sports, dance, excursions, open forums, cultural events, training, collective projects, etc. External strategies relate to how outsiders view the peace initiative based on the organization’s communicated narratives.

**TOOL 2:**
**MEASURE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

- Quantity and quality of theological reflection, outcome statements, press statements, radio programmes, websites, newsletters, etc.
- How many people are reached?
- Do people in the neighbourhood/region know the organization?
- Have people from religious leaders/community recently been engaged in peace activities?
GAP 3:
MEASURING THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT AND ORGANIZATION, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO FUNDING

As mentioned above, most of the initiatives from East Africa do not have a local sustainable mechanism and tend to depend wholly on external funding. This dependency can have an impact on their work as they might not function in the areas that are most important but instead shift to projects that are funded easily. It can also have an impact on beneficiaries and target such as religious leaders, as they start to expect money.

TOOL 3:
CONSIDER SUSTAINABILITY IN THE PROJECTS/APPLICATIONS

- Cooperation and structures are set up that continue to work in the future.
- Project includes aspects other than training only.
- Projects are linked to economic empowerment.

GAP 4:
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRICKLE-DOWN EFFECTS ARE NOT MEASURED

Most of the initiatives that include leaders (political and religious) and mid-level decision-makers have little or no impact on the grassroots. The trickle-down effect aimed at reaching the lower social levels of society seems scarce. In many cases, religious leaders seem to be very open to dialogue when joining forums and conferences but, once they are back in their communities, they do not uphold this position and neglect the need to pass on this knowledge and openness to their followers. After training of religious leaders, an intra-faith process should take place in the communities whereby the IRD-trained leaders disseminate their experience through open discussions with their respective community members.

TOOL 4:
FOLLOW UP REGULARLY AND CHECK ON COMMITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

- Follow up contributions of funds and time or other inputs provided by participants.
- Visit communities after a programme involving religious leaders has taken place to see the change, including monitoring of homilies or talks, implementation of agreements, etc.
- Consider if actions, e.g. speaking out and standing up for other religious traditions, have taken place.
**GAP 5:**
**COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION IS NOT MEASURED**

To maintain their legitimacy and avoid being seen as part of the government, religious agents need to be outspoken with regard to their relationship with government, aimed at cooperation based on the ideals of the common good of humanity, and not based on political partisanship.

**TOOL 5:** **CONSIDER PRINCIPLE-BASED COLLABORATION**

- What networks and cooperation does the organization have and how are they used?
- How is the relationship with the government?
- Can structures and cooperation be set up that last?

**GAP 6:**
**CONTENT OF TALKS IS NOT MEASURED**

The core activities of many interfaith programmes are based around meetings and forums at the different levels. The interviews show that, apart from the regularity and number of participants, what is important is the content of what is discussed and agreed during these meetings. Unfortunately, this is not always measured in terms of its quality and how it leads to further actions or the results of such actions.

**TOOL 6:**
**MEASURE WHETHER CONTENT OF TALKS ADDS VALUE AND LEADS TO FURTHER ACTION**

- What has been discussed from a theological perspective?
- What did the participants agree on?
- What are the results of the talks?
- Are there documents that lead to further action?
GAP 7: NO MEASURING OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Some of the interviews show that interfaith projects can be considered successful when social relations are built. This is an indicator particularly at the grass roots level. Although social relationships are difficult to measure, there should be more efforts put into doing so, as this guarantees the social sustainability of an intervention.

TOOL 7: MEASURE WHETHER SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS HAVE BEEN BUILT

- Do people meet regularly?
- Do they meet in a formal or informal setting?
- Do they support each other economically or spiritually?
- Are they organized in groups (i.e. inter-faith women’s groups at the grassroots)?
- Are they visiting each other?
- Do they describe each other as friends?
- Do they introduce their families to each other?

According to the online survey, the content of talks, trickle-down effect and actions were ranked highest as the key indicators of success in an IRD initiative. The graph below indicates the ranking of various tools for measuring, followed by a table indicating various categories of indicators.
5. **POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS OF IRD PLAYERS IN PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND PREVENTION OF CONFLICT**

It was evident, through this study, that religious agents enjoy a unique effectiveness in providing (immediate) service to society but that they are in danger of being compromised by their relationships with political agents.

In order to understand the potential and limitations of IRD players in East Africa to contribute to peaceful coexistence and prevention of conflict, it is important to consider a country’s context in terms of its political, religious or economic situation. In short, the contextual background influences and determines the potential and limitations of IRD players. In its 2016 report “Preventing violent extremism through promoting inclusive development, tolerance and respect for dignity”, UNDP underlined the distinct need for local contextualisation when preventing violent extremism, which also is very real when it comes to designing interreligious dialogue interventions.

It is important to distinguish what defines an “IRD player” as this comprises a wide range of people. One of the major players is the group of religious leaders. Their influence is great since they are highly respected figures in society, and what they relay to their adherents influences them. Religious leaders have a significant voluntary audience that comes on a regular basis to listen to them. Their outreach, as well as their potential for spreading the message of peace, is therefore great. Religious leaders can act as role models in society since they act as a mouthpiece of the people, condemning vices that may be happening in the society such as negative ethnicity, corruption or nepotism. Religious leaders are capable of solving conflicts among communities as well as acting as mediators in a bid to bring peace to the community.

Religious leaders stand for religious values, and these include tolerance, peace, love and inclusiveness. These values are also important when it comes to reconciliation, which is an integral part of peace initiatives. Religion, by its nature, advocates the sanctity of human life and IRD can be a hub for progressive activism aimed at religious pluralism and tolerance. Moreover, religion can unite people from different social, economic, political and ethnic backgrounds in a bid to forge peace and foster development in a country. Due to the great numbers of followers that religious leaders have, they have great potential to act as agents of change in society. The most significant potential of religion lies in its impact at the bottom. Religious communities are at the grassroots and can have a considerable social influence there.

Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that the misuse of religion can, at times, lead to social breakdown. This can easily happen if those religious leaders who are the mouthpiece themselves engage in intra-religious leaders’ rivalry, bipartisan politics, negative ethnicity or do not engage respectfully and peacefully with other religious leaders. For example, religion in the coastal region of Kenya has sometimes been negatively employed in dividing the society by creating animosity between communities.
Religious divides have been caused especially during the national and county elections, where both voters and political aspirants seek faith-based voting blocs to ensure their religious supremacy in the political leadership. The consequence of this split is the mutual demonization of one another’s religion, which inevitably feeds on the violent and exclusive narrative of radical preachers in churches and mosques. Religious leaders can also act as a hindrance to human development if they uphold conservative positions on issues that may be affecting society negatively, such as female genital mutilation or early child marriage in coastal communities in Kenya. It is therefore important and necessary to identify progressive religious actors from different religions to involve in peace-making initiatives.

Regarding the role of religious leaders, some of the respondents in the study were asked what IRD players should do differently to enhance peaceful coexistence in East Africa. The respondents lamented that: “There is a need to enact an approach of working together without judgment, with the view that followers of other religious traditions and those who do not identify with any religious culture are part of a single human family.” Differences between belief or non-belief do not change this fundamental truth. Another respondent in a group discussion suggested that there was a need to recognize and reinforce the positive values those religious groups proclaim while encouraging tolerance towards others who may hold similar views about their particular beliefs and customs. The ability to sit down together, to dialogue and to cooperate in the enterprise of improving the quality of life for all, no matter what their religion, also takes place in our area even though they recognize that they adhere to different faith traditions.

In another group discussion, a respondent stressed that authentic dialogue would happen if people of differing religious views were to engage in a dialogue on common topics, involving two or more people with differing opinions. The primary purpose of this is for each participant to learn from the other so that he or she can change or grow. Different issues regarding views on proselytism arose. Some respondents were entirely opposed to it while some supported it. The majority felt that proselytism should not be the aim of IRD initiatives but that conversion to another religion was one of the human freedoms embedded in the constitutions of the three countries studied and could be undertaken in a respectful matter, showing the utmost respect for all religions.
SUMMARIZING POTENTIAL & LIMITATIONS

Potential:
• wide outreach on the part of religious leaders in disseminating peace messages
• highly respected figures in society with great influence
• significant voluntary audience on a regular basis
• act as role models in society
• act as a mouthpiece of the people in condemning vices that may be happening in society
• are capable of solving conflicts among communities by acting as mediators
• stand for religious values, which include tolerance, peace, love and inclusiveness
• promote reconciliation, which is an integral part of peace initiatives
• religion advocates the sanctity of human life
• religion can unite people from different social, economic, political and ethnic backgrounds in a bid to forge peace and foster development in a country
• impact from the top down to the grassroots

Limitations:
• religion can be a factor of social conflict, for example, a demonization of religion (or of the “other”) fuels the violent and exclusive narratives of some political leaders and radical preachers
• privileges of religious leaders emanating from the status quo hinder transformative leadership
• religious leaders can act as a hindrance to development if they uphold conservative stance on issues that may be affecting society negatively

6. In an interview with a joint interreligious committee in Zanzibar, October 2015.
7. Ibid.
8. In an Interview with CJPC Malindi, Kenya, October 2015.
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interreligious dialogue has, significantly, become a standard response to various conflicts, religious strife and religious nationalism. This pilot study on methodological approaches and tools for measuring change and the results of working with religion and religious actors for peace and reconciliation has partially highlighted the fact that, despite the use of different approaches by various practitioners, the primary aim of all interreligious dialogue programmes is to promote tolerance and encourage peaceful coexistence. Although IRDs have become significantly more popular, these dialogue programmes are little scrutinized or evaluated to measure their impact and efficacy. To understand and determine the nature of the various initiatives in East Africa, we first sought to understand the general landscape of IRD players in East Africa and realized a myriad of general models in East Africa. In a bid to address this gap, our study has highlighted a missing link in terms of monitoring and evaluation. The study also analysed various approaches to IRD, which have been categorized into different dialogue concepts namely: critical-dialogic education, parliamentary dialogue, conflict resolution and peacebuilding on the international and local level, dialogue in the community and collective inquiry. From various actions, it is clear that there is an under-utilized sectoral, organizational and community-based capacity that needs to be tapped in interreligious dialogue initiatives. Most of these initiatives have not achieved their full potential in terms of fulfilling their mission and vision. The study shows, however, that community-based organizations are most effective when it comes to nurturing peaceful coexistence among communities. This is because community-based organizations are based at the grassroots level and participants know one another and regularly relate in different social situations. IRD initiatives should build on this social capital to encourage their members to engage in activities, such as income-generating and sports initiatives in order to foster an equal belonging of members and local ownership of IRD peace projects. IRD activities whose goal is community socio-economic empowerment are the preferred recipe for ensuring the sustainability of community-based peace projects.

Concerning the mid-level, social aspect involving local decision-makers, including religious leaders, the study found that although most initiatives include forums and training of religious leaders as part of their activities, the trickle-down effect is often neglected and, thus, not taken into consideration. There should be leadership accountability in the leaders’ mind set during IRD processes, which should start and end in an intra-faith process once the leaders return to their communities. Furthermore, the content of any forum or training course should include ways forward and binding documents or agreements rather than “just” sitting down together to talk.

The study found that there are local organizations with a respectable knowledge of the context but which lack capacity in terms of organizational development, staff development, communication strategy and M&E in general. Further, the study revealed that the apparent lack of networking among stakeholders working in interreligious relations runs the risk of duplicating efforts. This study only partially highlighted various approaches used in IRD, i.e., some secular and religious models, which were clustered into one-faith, ecumenical and interreligious models. However, time limitations and the scope of the study did not allow for any meaningful comparison of these various models to determine their effectiveness.
From the findings, the consultants recommend the following initiatives to measure change and the results of working with religion and religious actors for peace and reconciliation:

i. Start sharing tools and approaches for M&E in IRD initiatives by creating an IRD M&E expert working group to provide this help. This working group can harmonize key areas of focus and collectively monitor progress from individual actions. The group could provide a resource for knowledge and capacity building in interreligious relations and ensure a wide distribution of useful tools and learning materials for IRD practitioners.

ii. Encourage and support communication and collaboration among those engaged in interreligious dialogue in the East Africa region.

iii. Increase capacity building of those religious leaders focused on transformative leadership to ensure that the potential and limitations of religious players are identified and progressive thinking consolidated. Such capacity will increase the strategic influence of religious players.

iv. Increase collaboration between FBOs and CSOs, religious and secular actors and encourage a bottom-up approach because peace is felt and appreciated most at the community level and that is where it has to be built.

v. Future IRD peace interventions should be mainstreamed into socio-economic and human development projects, especially in multiple religious communities. Deliberate effort will be required to measure the impact of the same projects on the various faith communities and, where necessary, undertake an equalizing intervention in order to address real or perceived disparities between faith communities in term of their socio-economic progress.

vi. Offer a deeper study on methodological approaches and tools for measuring change. Future studies could focus on identified gaps, for example, the relationship between peace outcomes and the nature of the organization, trickle-down effects, content of talks, sustainability.

vii. Social relationships as one key indicator of peace outcomes require more research to determine how to measure whether these relationships are weakened or destroyed during conflict. In cases where conflict has polarized people along religious, ethnic or racial lines, for example, it will be important to monitor improved/deteriorated interreligious human relationships.
7. REFERENCES


