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www.gsdrc.org
helpdesk@gsdrc.org

Helpdesk Research Report

Religious leaders and the prevention of electoral violence

Huma Haider

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Question

How have religious leaders been involved in reducing the risk of electoral and political violence and supporting free and fair elections (international experience and Kenya specific)? Where available, include a discussion on particular initiatives and how religious leaders were engaged or approaches on how this can be done.

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1. Overview

Religion and religious identity can be used to foster fragmentation. Religious leaders themselves have at times incited – and later supported – violence, including electoral and political violence. Religious leaders and other religious actors can in turn play important roles in creating cohesion (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015). There is limited literature specifically on the role of religious leaders in countering electoral and political violence, even less on ways in which to engage leaders in taking on such a role. While highlighting particular initiatives involving religious leaders during electoral cycles, this report also draws on literature that discusses the engagement of religious actors more generally. In the particular case of Kenya, there is also limited available literature on specific initiatives involving religious leaders in countering electoral and political violence aside from general discussion about their role in the lead up to and aftermath of the 2007-2008 political violence.

There are various characteristics associated with religious leaders that make them well placed to mobilise stakeholders and to engage in efforts to counter violence and promote peace. These include:

- Trustworthiness and credibility
- Shared and respected set of values with different sides of a conflict and unique leverage as spiritual leaders
- Understanding of the local context, presence in local communities and local legitimacy
- Strong networks and access to various levels of power

Religious leaders may differ in their willingness to be involved in politics and in peacebuilding. Newer reformist churches in Africa, for example, exhibit less inclination than leaders from the established churches in playing a role in political debates and engaging in peace initiatives (Cooke, 2015). The particular interests of religious actors can determine the role they play in political change and support for democracy (Villalón, 2015). A study on Nigeria finds that geographic factors can also play a role. Religious leaders that live in religiously diverse and integrated settings were more likely to encourage religious tolerance than those living in religiously homogenous settings (Dowd, 2014).

Religious leaders also differ in their ability to engage effectively in countering violent conflict. Those who operate in an environment with strong horizontal networks (common religious beliefs, symbols, and activities) and strong vertical networks (connections between religious leaders and believers), were more informed and able to coordinate conflict resolution efforts (De Juan, Pierskalla and Vüllers, 2015).

The influence of religious leaders also depends on the organisational form of a particular religion. Religious leaders who give sermons in congregational religions are more likely to be able to mobilise citizens along religious lines than those whose role is more circumscribed (Chhibber and Sekhon, 2016).

There are various ways in which religious leaders can engage in curtailing electoral and political violence and promoting peace. These efforts can be engaged in as individual leaders or through more collaborative intra- or inter-religious initiatives:

- Peace messaging and support for free and fair elections: religious leaders can advocate for peaceful elections through non-violent and inclusive discourse (Darnolf and Cyllah, 2014). These messages can be articulated through leaflets, the media, or more commonly, religious sermons.
- Civic education, debates and election monitoring: religious leaders have also played a role – often through larger groups – in facilitating, civic education, candidate debates (including televised public debates) and election monitoring.
- Codes of conduct: a public commitment by all stakeholders to non-violence can be effective in preventing tensions from escalating into violent conflict (UNDP, 2009). Umbrella religious organisations have taken the initiative to develop such pacts to encourage peaceful elections.
- Intra- and Inter-faith dialogue and Inter-faith initiatives: religious leaders have been engaged in such initiatives through religious umbrella organisations, development agencies and NGOs in order to improve relations, educate on electoral processes, and prevent electoral violence.

Kenya

Inter-religious institutions and inter-religious councils are well established and generally respected across Kenya (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014; Cox, Orsborne and Sisk, n.d.b.). The National Council of Churches in Kenya regularly publishes its positions on key political issues, such as elections and institutional appointments (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014). At the local level, there also appears to be a very high level of willingness to engage in local intra-religious dialogue. Many religious institutions in Kenya are grassroots-based and have the potential to reach people and communicate peace messages (Kilonzo, 2009).

During the most recent period of post-election violence, 2007-2008, religious leaders and inter-religious institutions divided along ethnic lines and failed to speak out against ethnic violence (Throup, 2015). Religious actors have, however, in the aftermath, been involved in peacebuilding efforts, and in averting electoral violence in the 2013 elections. Efforts include:

- Peace messaging: after having been silent for almost one year, religious leaders and institutions spoke out against violence and in defence of justice and human rights. Catholic bishops also supported the inter-party dialogue that eventually led to the unity government (Throup, 2015). In the lead up to the 2013 general elections, churches were heavily involved in peace rallies and peace caravans.
- Inter-religious forums spoke out against political leaders, including an NCCK initiative to mobilise Kenyans in all administrative provinces to support the prosecution of leaders who had instigated the post-election violence (Kilonzo, 2009).
- Inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue: the NCCK has supported inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue at the grassroots and national levels, helping communities to understand political processes and exposing them to countries that have experienced conflicts (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).
- Religious language and symbolism: Catholic bishops supported the interparty dialogue that eventually led to the Jubilee Coalition and unity government. Neo-Pentecostal and born-again language has become very prominent and was adopted by the Jubilee Alliance in the 2013 election (Deacon and Lynch, 2013; Deacon, 2015). Pastors repeatedly blessed candidates Kenyatta and Ruto (Jubilee Alliance), describing their alliance in divine terms (Deacon, 2015).
- Civic education: the literature cites an example of a past initiative, implemented in Kibera by a Catholic parish. Parishioners who participated in the programme were found to demonstrate a notable improvement in their democratic values and behaviour at the localised level within their own parish groups. These positive outcomes remained localised, however.

There are various challenges to the role played by religious leaders in Kenya:

- Factors undermining inter-faith collaboration: inter-religious collaboration at the national level has been undermined by tension between Christian and Muslim groups over the issue of Kadhis (Islamic) courts. An organisational hindrance to effective inter-religious institutions is a mismatch in the internal bureaucracies of particular denominations (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).
- Problems with perceptions of impartiality: religious leaders have attempted to restore their lost positive image and credibility, due to charges of partisanship. Nonetheless, Kenyans remain sceptical over the impartiality of religious leaders (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).
- Muted debate and preservation of the status quo: the extensive peace messaging promoted by religious leaders and other actors has had the negative effect of suppressing dissenting opinions and discussion of grievances (Elder, Stigant and Claes, 2014; Deacon and Lynch, 2013).
- Capacity and funding: peacebuilding programmes that engage religious actors are often the first to get cut when donor priorities shift.

- Regional differences: a study conducted by Elder, Stigant and Claes (2014) finds that despite the consensus that the 2013 general elections in Kenya were peaceful, there was localised tension and violence throughout the electoral cycle.

Lessons learned on engaging religious leaders

There are various factors that could strengthen the role of religious leaders in preventing electoral and political violence, and initiatives designed to engage them:

- Conflict analysis: it is essential to engage in conflict analysis in order to mitigate the risk of improper or ineffective engagement with religious actors (USAID, 2009; Fomunyoh, 2009).
- Flexibility: a flexible approach should be adopted in identifying religious leaders capable of playing a significant role (Silvestri and Fba, 2015). Initiatives themselves should also be afforded flexibility in terms of methodologies (allowing for Western conflict resolution methodology with religious and local customs) (Smock, 2006).
- Engage a diverse range of leaders: the engagement of higher ranking religious officials can be critical to engagement at the local level, as lower ranking religious leaders often take their cue from them (USAID, 2009). There is also a need to widen engagement of religious actors beyond the focus on Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and to engage with religious leaders that have expertise in inter-faith dialogue and/or to seek inter-religious partnerships. Moderate religious leaders should be supported early on (Weingardt, 2008; cited in Silvestri and Fba, 2015).
- Focus not only on leaders but also grassroots: various scholars emphasise the value of engaging faith-based grassroots actors and whole indigenous communities, rather than solely religious leaders (see Silvestri and Fba, 2015). A focus on leaders is also likely to ignore the voice of women since most organised religions have male-dominated religious leadership (Silvestri and Fba, 2015; USAID, 2009; UNDP, 2014).
- Impartiality is important: impartiality and neutrality of religious leaders should be promoted such that they can be in a strong position to promote peaceful conduct and act as impartial arbiters where needed.
- Take the time to build trust: religious leaders may be reluctant or sceptical to engage in programming. Actors seeking to engage religious leaders need to make efforts at the outset to establish confidence and trust – and to build a sound partnership (USAID, 2009).
- Attention to capacity building: many religious leaders require assistance and training to engage in networking activities, campaigning, training, electoral observation and monitoring, and conflict prevention and reconciliation programming (Weingardt, 2008; cited in Silvestri and Fba, 2015; UNDP, 2014).
- Intra-faith dialogue is also important: in some situations, intra-faith dialogue must precede inter-faith dialogue, in order to mentally prepare groups for engaging with the “other” (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015; Smock, 2006).
- Inter-religious peacebuilding efforts must be holistic: inter-religious dialogue efforts have often failed to address underlying social inequalities and have remained disconnected from other forms of peacebuilding. Many initiatives while effective at the local level need to find ways to influence developments at sub-national and national levels.

- Adopting inclusive language: framing programmes in secular language may in some situations be perceived as threatening or may not resonate well with religious leaders (see USAID, 2009). In addition, religious-based peace initiatives can be enhanced through the selective use of religious texts by religious leaders, particularly use of scripts of other religions.
- Expand the programming repertoire: the range of programming that engages religion or religious actors directly has been relatively limited and could benefit from more creative and innovative programming (USAID, 2009).
- Invest in monitoring and evaluation: the evidence base for programmes addressing religion and conflict and engaging with religious actors is currently weak and would benefit from greater efforts at monitoring and evaluation (USAID, 2009).

2. Role of religious leaders – international experience

2.1 Role of religious actors in discord and violence

Religion and inter-religious group relationships are not inherently conflictual, however, religion can be used by religio-political entrepreneurs to incite violent conflict. Identity conflicts may thus take on religious dimensions even if theological or religious disputes are not at the base of a conflict. Some scholars estimate that around half of all armed conflicts have religious overtones (see Basedou and Koos, 2015). De Juan, Pierskalla and Vüllers (2015) emphasise, however, that while religion can be associated with violence, religious violent conflicts comprise a minority of all armed conflicts.

Religious leaders have influenced the mobilisation of religious identities in many parts of the world (see Chhibber and Sekhon, 2016). Case studies indicate that religious leaders can also instigate violence. A study on political violence perpetrated by Jews and Muslims in Israel finds, for example, that relative economic and political deprivation results in support for violence only when religious leaders offer an inflammatory interpretation of such deprivations (Canetti et al., 2015, cited in Basedou and Koos, 2015).

A review of the literature suggests that religious leaders incite – and later support – violence when they feel threatened by competitors and seek to preserve and extend their influence among believers or political leaders (Basedou and Koos, 2015). The review also highlights the importance of context in determining when religious leaders may support violence. Factors that are likely to increase the likelihood of calls for violence include: close relations between political and religious leaders; existing group inequalities and forms of marginalisation (including the marginalisation of religious leaders themselves); and personal convictions opposed to secularism and tolerance of other faiths (see Basedou and Koos, 2015).

There are various cases in which religious leaders have been involved in electoral and political discord and violence, in particular. In Nigeria, for example, Christian and Muslim religious leaders have tried to gain followers and influence by claiming to be effective at checking the social and political influence of the rival religion (Dowd, 2014). Such competition has spilled over into electoral politics. Christian religious leaders in Rivers State were accused of receiving bribes and campaigning against the Muslim presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, circulating a document aimed to trigger fears of an Islamisation of the country under his leadership. Such actions are considered to have exacerbated tensions (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015). Religious leaders in Nigeria have also been accused of undermining free and fair elections not only by failing to condemn vote rigging, but allowing politicians who won fraudulent elections to engage in ‘thanksgiving’ in churches and mosques to acknowledge God’s sovereignty and faithfulness (Familusi, 2012).

Religious leaders have in some cases sought explicitly to take part in politics. In Guatemala, for example, religious leaders from Neo-Pentocostal churches have participated in national and local level elections, adopting a conservative discourse and reinforcing authoritarian values. Religious ideologies have been used as a mechanism to increase the number of voters. This has had the effect of increasing communal divisions (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015).

Kenya has experienced many forms of conflict and insecurity, including cycles of political violence around presidential elections (see Cox and Ndung’u, 2014). Religion in the country has served both to unite and divide at different levels. A comprehensive study on social cohesion finds that while religious institutions often unify ethnic groups at the local level – through shared religious practices and experiences and through service provision – they are more likely to generate social fragmentation and inter-group mistrust at the national level (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015; Cox and Ndung’u, 2014). A report produced by the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) of Kenya finds, for example, that church leaders and elders participated in incitement of ethnic-based violence particularly during the 1992 and 2007 general elections (see Cox and Ndung’u, 2014). The failure of churches in Kenya to speak out against corruption has also contributed to discontent and undermined their credibility and ability to foster cohesion on a national scale (Cox and Ndung’u, 2014).

2.2 Role of religious actors in preventing violence

Given that religion and religious identity can be used to foster fragmentation, religious leaders and other religious actors can in turn play important roles in creating cohesion (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015). Even in conflicts that do not have a religious component, religious leaders can still play a beneficial role in promoting peace (see Silvestri and Fba, 2010). Cox, Orsborn and Sisk (2015) argue that development actors should draw upon religious leaders to help engage local communities in political participation and disseminate messages of national cohesion in communities.

There are various **characteristics and capacities associated with religious leaders that make them well placed to engage in efforts to counter violence**, including electoral and political violence, and to promote peace. These include:

- **Trustworthiness and credibility:** religious leaders are often considered trustworthy and credible due to their established roles in their respective communities. They inspire confidence and have a moral authority and cultural and practical closeness to parties involved (Silvestri and Fba, 2015; UNDP, 2014, USAID, 2009). Case studies reveal that legitimacy for new institutions and social norms can be generated by approval of religious leaders and communities (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015).
- **Shared and respected set of values with different sides of a conflict and unique leverage as spiritual leaders** that allows them to influence communities: values (such as forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and compassion) in religious texts and teaching, and emphasis on human wellbeing, can serve to motivate changes in attitudes and actions; and rehumanise and transform perceptions of the “other” (USAID, 2009; Johnston and Cox, 2003 in Silvestri and Fba, 2015; Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015; Kilonzo, 2009). Case studies find that religious leaders can de-legitimise the use of violence as a legitimate strategy through the reinterpretation of sacred texts (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015).

- **Understanding of the local context, presence in local communities and local legitimacy**: religious leaders often have a deep understanding of the local context, and strong presence in local communities, which enables them to mobilise support and work successfully at the local level (UNDP, 2014; USAID, 2009). In some cases, they also have a deep contextual knowledge and understanding of conflict drivers (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015).
- **Strong networks and access to various levels of power**: religious leaders often have access to all levels of power—community, national, and international, which allows them to address conflicts on multiple levels (USAID, 2009). They also have extensive networks of congregations, affiliates and individuals that comprise effective channels of communication and human and financial resources. Religious leaders can thus facilitate access by development agencies to communities and community leaders to maximise support for peace initiatives (UNDP, 2014).

Religious leaders may differ in their willingness to be involved in politics and in peacebuilding. In some countries in Africa, including Kenya, there has been an expansion in recent decades of new religious actors, often charismatic or reformist. They have exhibited less inclination than leaders from the established churches in playing a role in political debates and engaging in intra- or inter-religious dialogue, mediation or reconciliation. Rather, their focus has been on building their following and resource base (Cooke, 2015).

The particular interests of religious actors can determine the role they play in political change and in support for democracy. Based on experiences in Senegal, Villalón (2015) finds that calculations of costs and benefits to themselves are central to the motivations of religions actors and the positions they take, in addition to ideology. In Senegal, religious actors have implicitly supported democratic reform processes – through symbolic acts such as public prayers for all candidates and for peaceful elections – as democracy has been an effective way to pursue public policies in line with religious values (Villalón, 2015).

A study on Nigeria finds that geographic factors can also play a role. Christian and Muslim religious leaders that live in religiously diverse and integrated settings were more likely to openly encourage religious tolerance than those living in religiously homogenous/segregated settings (Dowd, 2014).

Religious leaders also differ in their ability to engage effectively in countering violent conflict. Those who operate in an environment with a dense layer of religious institutions were more informed about grievances among followers and more able to coordinate conflict resolution efforts. A dense layer of institutions strengthens horizontal and vertical contacts and networks within religious communities (De Juan, Pierskalla and Vüllers, 2015). Horizontal networks comprise common religious beliefs, symbols, and activities (e.g. festivals, performance of religious rites) that cut across non-religious cleavages (Dahal and Bhatta, 2008; in De Juan, Pierskalla and Vüllers, 2015). Vertical networks are connections between religious leaders and believers (e.g. religious services, prayer groups). Such regular meetings between religious leaders and constituents provide the space for believers to inform religious leaders about growing tensions early on and for leaders to publicly condemn violence and call for peace and restraint) (De Juan, Pierskalla and Vüllers, 2015). In Nepal, local religious actors and institutions have played an important role in intra-community mediation and conflict resolution within Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist communities. Their ability to play such a role lies in part on the presence of strong networks. In Lombok, Indonesia, Kingsley (2012) finds that the influence of Muslim religious leaders (Tuan Guru) is often reinforced by organisational networks that promote allegiance and sources of patronage (e.g. Islamic boarding schools, provision of social services).

The influence of religious leaders also depends on the organisational form of a particular religion. Religious leaders differ in their ability to mobilise religious identities. Chhibber and Sekhon (2016) argue that this can be attributed to the organisational form of the religion: religious leaders who give sermons in congregational religions are more likely to be able to mobilise citizens along religious lines than those whose role is more circumscribed. They find in their study of Hindu and Muslim responses to a Get-Out-To-Vote experiment in India that Muslims have greater confidence in such political appeals if their leaders use religious (Muslim) cues, in contrast to Hindus. They attribute this to the different set up of Hindu temples, which Hindu priests have constrained roles and believers often go to pray alone. In contrast, mosques are places for the community to congregate and listen to the religious leader (the imam) deliver sermons on religion or on social and political issues important to the community (Chhibber and Sekhon, 2016).

Efforts to counter electoral and political violence

There are various ways in which religious leaders can engage in curtailing electoral and political violence and promote peace. These efforts can be engaged in as individual leaders or through more collaborative intra- or inter-religious initiatives.

Peace messaging – and support for free and fair elections

The public discourse adopted by religious leaders can play a very important role in how elections play out. They can proactively advocate for peaceful elections through rational and non-violent discourse rather than a divisive mentality (Darnolf and Cyllah, 2014). These messages can be articulated through the publication and distribution of leaflets, through the media (press releases, radio, television), or more commonly, through sermons at religious services.

A study of **Nigeria**, for example, finds that peace messaging initiatives of religious authorities (particularly in the South East) during elections (particularly in 2015) have been important and should be encouraged. Interviewees felt that religious leaders have much potential to prevent electoral violence (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015). Christian and Muslim leaders in various states (e.g. Borno state, Kaduna state, Rivers state) have appealed to their congregations, particularly impoverished youth, in sermons and on radio and television for calm and advised people to conduct themselves in a peaceful manner and not respond to provocations (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015; Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010). They have also encouraged their followers to register, collect their voting cards and cast their vote peacefully. In Borno state, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) chairman for the state, Reverend Titus Pona, explicitly urged voters to disregard religious affiliations and vote instead for candidates they believed would improve their living conditions (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015). In Abia state, religious leaders were charged by local interviewers to be biased and lacking in moral authority to influence the conduct of candidates or their supporters; however, some religious leaders seem to have attempted to remain neutral, to emphasise the value of democracy, and promote reconciliation (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015).

In **Uganda**, individual religious leaders have generally been more engaged on political issues than inter-faith groups or specific faiths or denominations. Bishop Zac Niringiye, for example, of the Anglican Church, used his sermons to demand political change – to push for a process for elections and for President Musevini to step down and surrender power peacefully (Downie, 2015a). Downie (2015a) emphasises, however, that such outspoken religious leaders who confront social and political issues remain the exception.

A study of the 2008 elections in Lombok, **Indonesia**, finds that the active role played by Muslim religious leaders (Tuan Guru) was integral to the absence of violence during the election campaign, on election day and during the transition period between the election and inauguration of the new government. The Tuan Guru have authority not only in the mosques but across the island. They effectively sought to counter violence through religious sermons and specific instruction to followers over the mosque loud speakers to stop involvement with violence. They collaborated with local government officials who had developed a conflict management strategy, in order to counter the potential outbreak of election-related violence. The strategy was strongly endorsed by the Tuan Guru during Friday religious sermons and religious education classes. The Tuan Guru also pointed to Islamic principles, which provide a strong source of authority, in emphasising the importance of social harmony during election preparation; and made clear the risk of sanctions for those who deviated (Kingsley, 2012).

In **Guyana**, the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), which includes representatives of the three main religious faiths (Christian, Hindu and Islam), mobilised public support and demands for a peaceful electoral process in 2006 through public marches for peace and a button-wearing campaign with the word ‘peace’ in English, Hindi, Arabic and a local indigenous language (UNDP, 2009).

Civic education, debates and election monitoring

Religious leaders have also played a role in facilitating, civic education, candidate debates and election monitoring – often through larger groups.

In **Uganda**, for example, the Ugandan Christian Council (UJCC), an umbrella group for Christian denominations has been involved in civic education and election monitoring (Downie, 2015a). In **Nigeria**, DREP (an NGO founded in 2013 by Christian religious leaders and co-chaired by Christian and Muslim leaders as an inter-faith initiative) ran civic education programmes in 2015 in order to reduce the risk of election-related violence. It aimed to reduce the number of invalid votes, a key potential cause of conflict. DREP also ran awareness-raising campaigns with young voters, encouraging them to collect their voting cards from the Independent National Electoral Commission and cast their vote (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015).

In various states in Nigeria (e.g. Kaduna state, Lagos state), religious leaders and religions institutions have played a positive and non-partisan role in recent election cycles by organising and facilitating televised public debates (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015; Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010). In Lagos state, local interviewees believed that the televised event organised by the Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Nigeria helped to reduce hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric, and gave voters the opportunity to hear and assess candidates’ manifestos (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015). In Rivers state, some Christian and Muslim leaders monitored events on the ground through local networks and tried to prevent violent clashes by forbidding parties to campaign in hot spots. They also trained community reporters and key community influencers to collect information on incidents and to mobilise public opinion toward non-violence (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015).

Such initiatives can, however, produce controversy. In **Tanzania**, attempts by the Catholic Church to engage in civic education in the 2010 national elections campaign was viewed negatively by political candidates of the dominant ruling party. Although their pastoral letter on civic education merely urged readers to make informed political choices based on candidates’ worthiness for office, the candidates interpreted the tough language on corruption as an implicit criticism of their record in office – and thus, as a hostile intervention. President-elect Jakaya Kikwete then critiqued such documents as creating a situation whereby Tanzanians would vote under directives of their religions (Downie, 2015b).

Codes of conduct

A public commitment by all stakeholders to non-violence can be effective in preventing tensions from escalating into violent conflict (UNDP, 2009). In **Guyana**, the Inter-Religious Organisation took the initiative to lobby and work toward a peaceful electoral process in 2006. It encouraged political parties to develop and commit to a Political Party Elections Code of Conduct that emphasised a commitment to non-violence. It identified a widely respected facilitator (an academic from the University of Guyana) to work with the major political parties on developing the code of conduct, and also involved the Elections Commission. The IRO organised a public campaign for the signing of the Code, with representatives of all the major faiths, the Elections Commission and all the key donor governments and development agencies. Although the main opposition party did not end up signing the Code, it committed to the spirit and content of the Code (UNDP, 2009). UNDP (2009) finds that a key factor in the success of the initiative is that the IRO comprised a joint religious appeal to the population that cut across political and racial divisions that fuel election-related violence in Guyana.

In **Nigeria**, DREP also brought together the three leading gubernatorial candidates in the 2015 elections to sign a Peace Accord in which they affirmed their desire to conduct peaceful elections and to accept the result (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015).

Intra- and inter-faith dialogue and inter-faith initiatives

Religious leaders have been engaged in intra- and inter-faith dialogue by religious umbrella organisations, development agencies and NGOs in order to improve relations, educate on electoral processes, and promote the prevention of electoral violence.

In **Zimbabwe**, a group of church leaders from different Christian denominations came together during the politically sensitive period of 2008-2009 to reflect on the role of their churches in defusing tensions. They established the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (ECLF), which then engaged religious and community leaders across the country to promote local peace dialogues and outreach. UNDP in Zimbabwe initiated collaboration with ECLF in 2009 to develop the skills of local religious leaders in conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation (UNDP, 2014). As a result of this capacity-building, ECLF facilitated community dialogues for peace and social cohesion that brought together traditional leaders, political parties, police and local council leaders. UNDP also facilitated collaboration among ECLF and national stakeholders, such as the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration to develop a more coordinated approach to peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe (UNDP, 2014).

In **Nigeria,** despite accusations of bias, religious leaders and institutions in Kaduna state have generally played a positive and non-partisan role in recent election cycles, joining forces to engage in inter-religious initiatives to mitigate violent conflict. An example include, Archbishop John Onaiyekan and the Sultan of Sokoto, Mohammad Sa’ad Abubakar, who co-chair the Nigeria Inter-religious Council, speaking out in favour of peaceful coexistence and de-escalation of tensions (Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010). Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, co-directors of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre (and former enemies), have also encouraged communities to remain peaceful through elections. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama’atu Nasril Islam (JNI) brought Muslim and Christian clergy together at a meeting chaired by the Sultan of Sokoto (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015). The Kaduna State Government also facilitated regular peace initiatives that brought Christian and Muslim clerics together to discuss the disutility of violence and issues of accountability (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015). Afolabi and Avasiloae (2015) emphasise that religious leaders in Kaduna state have the ability to mute existing and potential tensions and that it would be beneficial to invest in inter-faith dialogue and other initiative.

In Lagos state, the Inter-faith Forum International (IFI), founded to promote religious harmony and peaceful coexistence between local Christian and Muslim residents, facilitated collaboration between the leaders of both faiths. During election time, IFI organised special interfaith prayer events to promote peace that were attended by religious leaders from both faiths. Interviewees believe that such peace initiatives by religious leaders helped to lower the level of violence in the state (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015). In Ibidan state, Christian and Muslim leaders have regularly issued joint statements and worked together to sponsor events designed to prevent inflammatory rhetoric and episodes of inter-religious violence (Dowd, 2014).

The Inter-faith Mediation Centre, with a contract from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), undertook an earlier initiative in Nigeria, during the 2003 election. It adopted a pro-active strategy to help young religious leaders confront and revise their stereotypes and prejudices and support non-violent behaviour, interdependency and collaboration. Participants were carefully selected from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones and were believed to hold positions of influence among their peers. The format of the workshop entailed two days of intra-religious dialogue, during which Christians and Muslims met separately, to prepare and sensitise them for the inter-religious sessions. Discussions included dispelling misconceptions and stereotypes, generating positive sentiments of the other faith group and steps for a productive, ongoing dialogue (Ashafa and Wuye, 2006). More recently, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, conducted forums that brought together Christian and Islamic leaders and other members of civil society to learn about election procedures, the proper conduct of polling officials, use of voting cards, and how to prevent community violence during the election (Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015).

Cox, Orsborn and Sisk (2015) find that while dialogue programming in Nigeria is considered to be effective at the local level, it rarely has an impact at the national level: attitudinal goodwill at the local level has limited power to address religious bi-polarisation linked to domestic and global religious trends.

In **Sri Lanka**, efforts have also been made to engage religious leaders in inter-religious work in order to promote reconciliation and peace, with particular attention to developing horizontal linkages between communities (relationship-building through dialogue and collaboration on small, concrete activities). There has also been a focus on peaceful teachings and commonalities of all religions, prayer sessions and panel discussions or workshops. Clergy involved in such forums may, however, be unable to explain concepts, principles and issues relating to other faiths to their own congregations. In addition, initiatives have avoided discussion of national level issues related to governance that are considered sensitive or contentious, for fear that such discussions could result in divisions and the collapse of the forums. Failure to discuss these issues has frustrated religious leaders from minority communities. It is thus important that those implementing such projects on the ground have the proper skills and training to manage and facilitate critical dialogue and debate. Nonetheless, similar to the case of Nigeria, while these local initiatives have been successful in building relationships and trust among clergy from different faiths and resolving local disputes, they rarely connect to the root drivers of the conflict at the national level. Religious actors operating at the community or even district level have felt powerless in the face of stronger political actors, particularly the state (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, n.d.a.; Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015).

3. Role of religious leaders – Kenya

Religious leaders and religious organisations have historically played important roles in promoting social cohesion and social change in Kenya. During the struggle for independence, African Independent Churches (AICs) played a key role in resisting colonialism. However, they were organised along ethnic lines, similar to the political parties at the time (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014). In the postcolonial era, religious leaders and inter-denominational Christian associations (e.g. clergy from mainline Protestant denominations under the umbrella body of the National Council of Churches of Kenya – NCCK; Catholic Church leadership, through its senior most leadership or through the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops) became very vocal in their demands for multiparty elections, achieved in 1992 (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014; Kilonzo, 2009). Pentecostals during the 1980s and 1990s were instead closely aligned with the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and President Moi, supporting the regime against the protests of civil society and mainstream churches (Throup, 2015). Religious leaders of the mainstream churches also subsequently became less vocal about democratic abuses during the Kibaki and Coalition government eras (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).

During the most recent period of post-election violence, 2007-2008, religious leaders and inter-religious institutions once again divided along ethnic lines and failed to speak out against ethnic violence (Throup, 2015). Moreover, many appeared to have 'played ethnic politics' themselves in the lead up to the violence, which contributed to a further erosion of legitimacy among religious leaders to speak out against state abuses and ethnic politics and in support of social cohesion. Nonetheless, religious actors have in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 electoral violence taken a large degree of ownership over initiatives for peacebuilding and inter-group reconciliation, creating the space for and supporting such initiatives (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014). The international community also invested heavily in peacebuilding efforts, including helping to support local civil society organisations in developing 'local capacities for peace', providing technical support for peace dialogues, supporting interventions such as peace marches or 'peace caravans', local peace education programmes and peace messaging via SMS systems.

Large-scale election-related violence was avoided in the 2013 general elections. International election observers declared the elections to be peaceful and there was widespread relief that the mass violence of 2007-2008 had been prevented. There are various reasons given in the literature for this peaceful outcome. They include (see Throup, 2015; Cox and Ndung'u, 2014; Elder, Stigant and Claes, 2014; Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis, 2014):

- International Criminal Court indictments: political leaders facing indictments had a strong disincentive to promulgate hate speech and directly mobilise youth groups for violence;
- The Jubilee Alliance: the two communities (Kikuyu and Kalenjin) that had historically been involved in inter-group violence – and had engaged in severe post-election violence in 2007–08 particularly in the Rift Valley – supported the same 'Jubilee' alliance. Catholic bishops supported the interparty dialogue that eventually led to the coalition and unity government. In the lead-up to the elections, local religious organisations also proposed that the National Alliance (TNA) and the United Republican Party (URP) would field candidates only in Kikuyu or Kalenjin-stronghold counties, respectively.
- Memory: memories of the high cost of ethnic violence in 2007-2008 reduced the appeal of violence and encouraged restraint.
- Peace narrative: a pervasive peace narrative delegitimised political activity that could result in political instability.

- Institutional reforms: the new constitution, a new electoral commission and laws, a reformed judiciary, legislation to prohibit hate speech and a commitment to rule of law are considered important in avoiding a repetition of violence.

3.1 Role of religious actors

Inter-religious institutions and inter-religious councils are well established and generally respected across Kenya (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014; Cox, Orsborne and Sisk, Kenya case study). With the majority of Kenyans practicing various Protestant Christian traditions, the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK) has a broad-based network of churches that give it legitimacy and the potential to be a powerful influencer. The NCCK regularly publishes its positions on key political issues, such as like elections and institutional appointments. The Inter-Religious Council also has the potential to play a key role in fostering a common voice for inter-ethnic reconciliation. Inter-religious groupings across Kenya generally have significant access to the government (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).

At the local level, there also appears to be a very high level of willingness to engage in local intra-religious dialogue. Many religious institutions in Kenya are grassroots-based and have the potential to reach people and communicate peace messages (Kilonzo, 2009). Religious institutions tend to unify ethnic groups at the local level, particularly where they provide equitable access to public goods. At the national level, however, religion can be more divisive (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015; Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).

Efforts to counter electoral and political violence

There are various ways in which religious leaders have been involved in peacebuilding in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 electoral violence:

Peace messaging

After having been silent for almost one year, religious leaders and institutions spoke out against violence and in defence of justice and human rights. Catholic leaders condemned the post-election violence, and many parishes in the worst-hit areas provided shelter to those displaced by the violence. Catholic bishops also supported the inter-party dialogue that eventually led to the unity government (Throup, 2015). Inter-religious forums (consisting of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), the Episcopal movement, the Hindu society and NCCK) spoke out against political leaders, including an NCCK initiative to mobilise Kenyans in all administrative provinces to support the prosecution of leaders who had instigated the post-election violence (Kilonzo, 2009).

In the lead up to the 2013 general elections, churches were heavily involved in electoral peace campaigns (alongside other actors, including local peace activists, civil society organisations, international organisations and politicians), such as peace rallies and painting trains and houses in Kibera with slogans of tolerance (Elder, Stigant and Claes, 2014). A group of churches formed the 'wheels/caravan of hope' (*msafara*) initiative, which co-ordinated prayers for the nation and food distribution to internationally displaced persons (Kilonzo, 2009).

Inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue

The NCCK has engaged in a peace building programme that has supported inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue at the grassroots as well as national levels, helping communities to understand key political processes. It has also attempted to expose communities to countries that have experienced conflicts, including through supporting supported trips to Rwanda to encourage ethnic group leaders to appreciate the impacts of identity-violence (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).

Religious language and symbolism

Calls for peace were a significant part of the narrative in Kenya in 2012 and 2013. While Catholics remain the largest single denominational grouping in Kenya, there has been a general national Pentecostalising of Christianity. Neo-Pentecostal and born-again language and understandings have become very prominent and were adopted by the Jubilee Alliance in the 2013 Kenyan general election (Deacon and Lynch, 2013; Deacon, 2015). The coalition campaigned using a narrative of a nation ridding itself of past sins, being redeemed and born again. This appealed to Kenyans who sought to move beyond the trauma of the 2007-2008 post-election violence (Deacon, 2015). Other dominant language also included that of repentance, forgiveness, and peace leading to God's favour and national and personal prosperity. Pastors repeatedly blessed the candidates Kenyatta and Ruto (of the Jubilee Alliance) and described their coming together in divine terms. Charismatic prophet David Owuor also held a national prayer and repentance event attended by nearly all the presidential candidates (Deacon, 2015).

Civic education

An example of a past initiative is a civic education programme in Kibera, a large and densely populated slum. In 2002-2005, a civic education programme was implemented in Kibera by the human rights ministry of a Catholic parish. Parishioners who participated in the programme (which covered topics such as nation building, constitution making, democracy and good governance, and integrated Christian ethics, beliefs and values) were found to demonstrate a notable improvement in their democratic values and behaviour at the localised level within their own parish groups. Participants took on board the importance of choosing leaders that represent their views and are honest and fair. This was evident in the 2004 small Christian communities' leadership elections, when about 75% of the leaders were voted out of office. The programme also enhanced parishioners' willingness to speak openly about a range of subjects, to tolerate and respect other views and counter prejudices (Bodewes, 2010).

These positive outcomes did not extend, however, to increased involvement in advocacy and lobbying efforts to hold government officials accountable for abuses of power in Kibera. This was attributed in part to fears of violent retaliation by local government officials and political sponsored youth wingers, apathy, ethnic divisions, limited resources and restrictive church protocols (Bodewes, 2010).

Challenges

Factors undermining inter-faith collaboration: inter-religious collaboration at the national level has been undermined by tension between Christian and minority Muslim groups over the issue of constitutional entrenchment of Kadhis courts as subordinate courts to deal with matters strictly related to sharia family law. Some of the Christian clergy led by the Catholic archbishops, Anglicans and other Pentecostal churches campaigned against the constitution on the basis that this provision would elevate Islamic religion in Kenya. For the Muslim community, the institutionalization of the Kadhis courts within the constitution was seen as a way to reduce their marginalisation. Although Kadhis courts have become formal law, the debate continues to divide Christians and Muslims (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014; Throup, 2015).

An organisational hindrance to effective inter-religious institutions is the existence of complex, internal bureaucracies within particular denominations. The Catholic Church, for example, has a vertical leadership structure, whereas Islamic mosques tend to have a horizontal leadership structure, which can hinder effective coordination and collaboration among religious bodies (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014). In addition, many of the new Pentecostal churches are far less interested in participating in intra-Christian, much less inter-faith, organisations or dialogue.

Problems with perceptions of impartiality: religious leaders (Christian and Muslim) and religious institutions have been accused of engaging in political partisanship in the lead up to the 2007 general elections, making known their preferred presidential candidates and even campaigning for particular candidates. Thus, churches lost their credibility as an institution standing above politics, and institutions that traditionally serve to represent Muslim interests to the state have been increasingly seen as co-opted by political leadership. During and in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 violence, religious actors were no longer in a strong position to condemn the violence largely instigated by certain political leaders (Kilonzo, 2009; Throup, 2015). Religious actors have since attempted to restore their lost positive image and credibility, and to support peacebuilding and reconciliation. A notable attempt is the public formal apology by the NCCK (and specific churches) for taking sides during the 2007 elections and for not doing enough to encourage a peaceful, participative process (Kilonzo, 2009; Deacon and Lynch, 2013). Nonetheless, Kenyans remain sceptical over the impartiality of religious leaders (Cox and Ndung'u, 2014). Further, despite these statements by religious actors, including neo-Pentecostal churches, that churches should remain neutral on political matters, actions have been to the contrary, with continued open endorsement of particular candidates by some churches (Deacon, 2015).

Muting debate and preserving the status quo: the extensive peace messaging, media self-censorship, and practices of inter-ethnic cooperation – promoted by religious leaders and other actors – in the lead up to the 2013 general elections had the positive effect of containing violence. However, it also had the negative effect of suppressing dissenting opinions and discussion on grievances related to governance, justice and equity (Elder, Stigant and Claes, 2014; Deacon and Lynch, 2013). This, some argue, may put a strain on long-term democratic development and conflict prevention (Elder, Stigant and Claes, 2014). In addition, the emphasis on neo-Pentecostal language and seeking prosperity through faith also veers toward maintaining the status quo and not actively addressing grievances (Deacon, 2015).

Capacity and funding: peacebuilding programmes that engage religious actors are often the first to get cut when donor priorities shift. Religious actors may thus have to spend significant amounts of time competing for scarce funding, rather than engaging in local peace work (Cox, Orsborne and Sisk, n.d.b; Cox and Ndung'u, 2014).

Regional differences: a study conducted by Elder, Stigant and Claes (2014) finds that despite the consensus that the 2013 general elections in Kenya were peaceful, there was localised tension and violence throughout the electoral cycle. A number of counties experienced consistently high levels of tension but low levels of politically motivated violence; other counties reported high levels of tensions coinciding with high levels of politically motivated violence. Physical violence erupted sporadically in multi-ethnic low-income areas in Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa, where the race for governor and senator was particularly fierce. According to participants, the 2013 elections also saw heightened political competition at the local level, where violence became intra-communal and materialised between different subclans. The study finds that political aspirants mobilised youth, particularly during campaign periods, to harass and intimidate oppositional aspirants and supporters. In only a few cases did participants firmly claim an absence of violence.

Churches throughout Kenya including on the coast involved themselves explicitly in campaigns for peaceful participation in the 2013 election. Clergymen in mainline churches were expected to avoid partisan sermons. They urged voters to choose competent politicians, to participate peacefully and accept the election results. Churches at the coast also positioned themselves as threatened by radical Islam. In contrast, there was more debate at mosques in Kenya's coastal communities, where Muslim communities have long harboured grievances over social and economic marginalisation. Muslims were mobilised to vote to protect themselves from mistreatment by the state. Thus, in the aftermath of the elections, Deacon et al. (forthcoming) emphasise that two very different patterns of religious involvement in politics have persisted on the coast: a public space to articulate Muslim discontent and political opposition, which has the potential to feed into growing violence at the coast, involving attacks by radical Islamists; and a general support for the established order by Christian churches, while presenting themselves as vulnerable victims of radical Islam.

4. Lessons learned in engaging religious actors

There are various factors that could strengthen the role of religious leaders in preventing electoral and political violence – and initiatives designed to engage them:

Conflict analysis: since religious leaders have been involved in both inciting and preventing violence it is important to have a nuanced understanding of how religion intersects with conflict dynamics and the roles that religious actors can play. While some religious leaders can act as a unifier, bringing people together in support of non-violent action, they may also have other motivations. Some religious actors may use their newfound platform to subordinate particular community members or groups. In some cases, the mere involvement of a religious leader may exacerbate the conflict by reinforcing existing fault lines. It is thus essential to engage in conflict analysis in order to mitigate the risk of improper or ineffective engagement with religious actors (USAID, 2009; Fomunyoh, 2009).

Flexibility: a review of the literature on religion and conflict emphasises that there is no single path for religious leaders or religious organisations to make a difference in conflict resolution. As such, a flexible approach should be adopted in identifying religious leaders capable of playing a significant role (Silvestri and Fba, 2015). In addition, initiatives themselves should be allowed flexibility in terms of methodologies. The inter-faith dialogue, conducted in Nigeria by Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa, for example, integrated and modified Western conflict resolution methodology with religious and local customs (Smock, 2006).

Engage a diverse range of leaders: The engagement of higher ranking religious officials can be critical to engagement at the local level, as lower ranking religious leaders and community members often take their cue from top religious leadership (USAID, 2009). USAID (2009) emphasises the need to also widen engagement of religious actors beyond the focus on Christianity, Islam and Judaism, which has been the prime focus. Failure to reach out to other religious groups that may be key stakeholders in conflict dynamics can undermine conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. It is also beneficial to engage with religious leaders that have expertise in inter-faith dialogue and/or to seek inter-religious partnerships during project planning and implementation as this generates *de facto* inter-religious dialogue in the course of trying to achieve project goals (UNDP, 2014). It also helps to ensure that donors are not reaching out to religious leaders that discriminate against members of other faiths (UNDP, 2014). Related to this, moderate religious leaders should be supported early on and their role as partners in dialogue and cooperation strengthened in order to counteract actors engaging in divisive, fundamentalist tendencies (Weingardt, 2008; cited in Silvestri and Fba, 2015). It may, however, be difficult to identify who moderate religious leaders are, due in part to shifting alliances (Silvestri and Fba, 2015).

Focus not only on leaders but also grassroots: religious actors involved in peacemaking extend beyond religious leaders and include grassroots peacemakers. Various scholars emphasise the value of engaging faith-based grassroots actors and whole indigenous communities, rather than solely religious leaders (see Silvestri and Fba, 2015). In many cases, Little (2007; cited in Silvestri and Fba, 2015) finds that it is ordinary clerics, rather than people in positions of power, who have contributed to peaceful conflict transformation. Policymakers have not, however, considered their role sufficiently. In addition, a focus on leaders is likely to ignore the important voice of women since most organised religions are structured along patriarchal lines, with male-dominated religious leadership (Silvestri and Fba, 2015; USAID, 2009; UNDP, 2014).

Impartiality is important: much of the literature and case studies demonstrate that the partisanship of religious leaders during election cycles undermines their influence and moral authority, and in turn, their ability to persuade candidates and their supporters to avoid violent behaviour. It is thus important to promote the impartiality and neutrality of religious leaders such that they can be in a strong position to promote peaceful conduct and act as impartial arbiters where needed (see Afolabi and Avasiloae, 2015; Familusi, 2012; Kilonzo, 2009; Deacon and Lynch, 2013).

Take the time to build trust: Religious leaders may be reluctant or sceptical to engage in programming. As such, USAID (2009) recommends that actors seeking to engage religious leaders need to make efforts at the outset to establish confidence and trust – and to build a sound partnership. This requires an honest dialogue about what each party hopes to achieve and whether this is common ground for action (UNDP, 2014). Developing such trust and sound partnership could mean adopting a longer timeline before beginning programming than is customary practice (USAID, 2009).

Attention to capacity building: religious leaders vary widely in their financial, technical and administrative capacities, often relying heavily on the volunteer workers. Many require assistance and training to engage in networking activities, public relations campaigns, expert training, electoral observation and monitoring, conflict prevention and reconciliation programming (Weingardt, 2008; cited in Silvestri and Fba, 2015; UNDP, 2014). They may also require assistance with planning, implementing and monitoring large-scale projects (UNDP, 2014).

Establish institutional capacity: USAID (2009) advises that development organisations develop the foundational knowledge and expertise to develop programmes to effectively engage in religious environments. Programming often remains non-strategic, either neglecting the importance of religion in a given context when implementing programmes – resulting in exacerbation of tensions because consultations with religious authorities were not built into planning and implementation; or getting entangled in religion in a way that appears to favour certain religious groups. Training programmes on religious literacy for staff working in such agencies should focus on positive aspects of religion (see Silvestri and Fba, 2015).

Intra-faith dialogue is also important: in some situations, fear of the “other” religion and group insecurity is too pronounced to bring two religious communities together from the outset. Here, intra-faith dialogue must precede inter-faith dialogue – in order to mentally prepare groups for engaging with social difference, to break down misconceptions and stereotypes of the “other”, and to develop a consensus on how to approach highly contentious issues (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015; Smock, 2006).

Inter-religious peacebuilding efforts must be holistic: focus on religious dialogue, alone, can be problematic, given that religious tension is linked to other identities and issues; and that conflict impacts all types of social cleavages and social inequalities. Inter-religious dialogue efforts have often failed to address underlying social inequalities and have remained disconnected from other forms of peacebuilding. In addition, a narrow focus on religious identity can serve to further inscribe those identities as the most salient part of a group's identity, ignoring other cross-cutting social bonds, thereby exacerbating tensions (Cox, Orsborn and Sisk, 2015).

Adopting inclusive language: framing programmes in secular language may in some situations be perceived as threatening or may not resonate well with religious leaders (see USAID, 2009). Programmes should be framed adopting community language norms. In addition, religious-based peace initiatives can be enhanced through the selective use of religious texts by religious leaders. It is particularly effective when religious leaders can move freely between the scripts of other religions. In Nigeria, for example, Muslim and Christian leaders involved in inter-religious dialogue have moved freely between the Koran and the Bible, with the imam often quoting from the bible and the pastor from the Koran. This can generate an atmosphere of inter-religious tolerance among participants (Smock, 2006; Paden, 2005; cited in Dowd, 2014).

Expand the programming repertoire: the range of programming that engages religion or religious actors directly has been relatively limited, and could benefit from more creative and innovative programming (USAID, 2009).

Invest in monitoring and evaluation: the evidence base for programmes addressing religion and conflict and engaging with religious actors is currently weak (relying, for example, solely on output measures – how many people attended a dialogue event; or relying on anecdotes of results) and would benefit from greater efforts at monitoring and evaluation (USAID, 2009).

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Expert contributors

Stephanie Buchard, Institute for Defense Analyses
Fletcher Cox, Willian Jewell College
Gregory Deacon, University of Oxford
Jeremy Kingsley, National University of Singapore
Debra Liang-Fenton, USIP
Gabrielle Lynch, Warwick University
Timothy Sisk, University of Denver

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