Faith, Peacebuilding and Governance in East Africa – A Local Approach

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Abstract

This paper argues that even though local evidence abounds regarding the role of local faith actors in peacebuilding and governance in East Africa, there seems to be a lack of collaborative enthusiasm in implementing proposed recommendations, limiting the potential of the contribution of faith in peacebuilding and governance at the praxis level. The paper uses a Pan-African theoretical conceptualization of democracy, peacebuilding and governance to examine desk literature in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, revealing some of the gaps in faith, peacebuilding and governance in the region. It adopts a qualitative methodological approach that consists of key informant interviews, foregrounded by document analysis, that focuses on literature around faith peacebuilding and governance to unmask some of the challenges and opportunities therein. At least five key informants were interviewed per country, including faith actors, members of civil society, and state agents or policymakers. The paper establishes sufficient local evidence of faith, peacebuilding, and governance, but insufficient evidence for the adoption of recommendations at the policy and practice level. The failure to adopt these recommendations is due to disjointed collaborative mechanisms by faith actors, academics, civil society, and policymakers in knowledge production and dissemination. The paper concludes that the potential contribution of faith actors to peacebuilding and governance can only be fully maximized if the identified knowledge gap is addressed.

Keywords: *Faith, Faith Actors, Peacebuilding, Governance, East Africa*

Faith and Peacebuilding in East Africa

Despite the enormous contribution by faith actors in peacebuilding and governance, there seems to be very little appraisal of their work owing to the knowledge gap between policymakers, practitioners, and academics in the field. The gap regards the different skill sets required by policymakers, practitioners and academics to collaborate in peacebuilding and governance on one hand and the fact that policymakers, practitioners and academics lack awareness of the contributions of faith actors on the other, leaving their efforts disjointed. The latter is demonstrated by the disjointed approaches taken by these stakeholders in knowledge production and dissemination, as well as actions oriented towards improved peacebuilding and governance in East Africa (Ogenga, Fastovsky, & Kidwai, 2024). Further, despite the available evidence of the role of faith actors in peacebuilding and governance, this evidence is not translated into policy and practice by critical stakeholders, limiting the contribution of faith in peacebuilding and governance at the praxis level. In addition, a significant amount of local faith-based work on governance and peacebuilding in East Africa is funded by international donors who could easily influence the work of faith actors (Ogenga, Fastovsky, and Kidwai, 2024). A good example of how faith actors and academics ought to collaborate to bridge the skills and awareness gap is demonstrated by the paper titled *Nurturing Peaceful Co-existence through Interfaith Collaboration: Responses to Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kenya and Zanzibar* (Halimu and Mbugua, 2011**)** that examined intervention by the Faith Action Network's Community Rich in Diversity Project. Faith Action Network (FAN) is a consortium of partners that includes the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa, the African Council of Religious Leaders, Religions for Peace, and the All-Africa Conference of Churches. In this case, FAN is a multi-faith-based mobiliser organization that offers support for family health, wellbeing, and peaceful coexistence (Halimu and Mbugua, 2011).

In many cases, faith-based work is also activist and oral in nature, inciting the need to find modern ways of documenting such efforts by utilizing Pan-African approaches to not only build on local knowledge creation but also contribute to literature that can be of benefit to grassroots communities in a sustainable manner. However, much of the work on faith governance, and peacebuilding has a colonial trajectory associated with the spread of the gospel in Africa by missionaries. For example, the National Council of Churches, which is a conglomeration

of religious entities that include the Anglican Church of Kenya and the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative in Uganda, boasts local authenticity but relies primarily on foreign support (Githigiro, 2012; Aklen, 2005; Natale, 2019).

Therefore, literature on faith, governance and peacebuilding and attendant practical approaches to addressing peace and governance challenges in East Africa must be decolonized for meaningful engagement with nuanced data that can influence policy and practice in East Africa for the benefit of East Africa's ecology (Wolff, 2022). There needs to be a discussion that shifts Africa's positionality from merely recipients of knowledge (religion included) and development aid in North–South relations to that of equal partners. There is also a need to reassess Africa's positionality in literature to employ African epistemic positions and *gnosis* in the knowledge of spiritual matters regarding peacebuilding and governance. This is necessarily the case because such epistemic positions would help reshape global policy conversations regarding Africa (Ogenga, Fastovsky, and Kidwai, 2024).

At the helm of these conversations should be the re-imagining of the idea of Africa by Africans, as opposed to the "invention" of Africa by the colonial perspectives of others. Against this backdrop, this paper explores the status of local evidence generation on faith, peacebuilding and governance in East Africa by local authorities to uncover what faith means for Africa's peacebuilding and governance; and ultimately, its democratic transition and consolidation.

Democracy, Governance and Peacebuilding: A Pan-African Theoretical Perspective

The theory of democratic peace or liberal peacebuilding and the Kantian concept of perpetual peace in the context of a local approach to peacebuilding (African gnosis) is a useful starting point in understanding the importance of local evidence in faith, peacebuilding and governance. The theory of democratic peace presumes that societies are more peaceful if they are democratic; in other words, peace is a prerequisite for democracy. This presumption largely emerged after the end of the Cold War where democratic governance became widely accepted as the central political framework for post-conflict peacebuilding (Ogenga, Fastovsky & Kidwai, 2024). The UN *Agenda for Democratization* and *Agenda for Peace* argue that because democratic governance is freely chosen by citizens and held accountable through periodic and genuine elections and other

mechanisms, democratic societies are more likely to promote and respect the rule of law as well as individual and minority rights. These societies can cope effectively with social conflict, absorb migrant populations and respond to the needs of marginalized groups (Aubyn, 2020) - A minimalist underpinning of democratic institutionalism which means that democracy can only be best exercised through established institutions that guarantee civil liberties, constitutionalism, human rights and periodic free and fair elections but does not envision institutional failure characterized by electoral fraud, human rights abuses and post-election violence.

Minimalistic democratic institutionalism allows for periodic elections through civic participation, respect for constitutionalism, the rule of law, human rights and civil liberties, all of which enable individuals to voluntarily subscribe to the idea of a federation (community). This process allows participants to feel as though they are part of the system as opposed to the Hobbesian "man in the bush" arrangement where conflict and survival for the fittest take center stage. In this context, humans are self-driven by their personal will to achieve peace as an end and not as a means to an end (perpetual peace) (Ogenga, Fastovsky, & Kidwai, 2024).

In this case, Africans are inspired by their own ways of seeing (gnosis) as opposed to how others want them to see themselves. However, attempts in Africa to pursue the former have often faced headwinds. In some instances, the manifestation of Pan-African ideals is informed by capital and driven by greed and self-interest as opposed to spiritualism explicated through human dignity and communal belonging (*ubuntu* and *ujamaa,* respectively). Therefore, it becomes increasingly critical to reclaim the African authentic self through self-driven spiritual actors geared towards realizing a greater good as an end (perpetual peace). African nations and societies that are more spiritual in their quest for democracy and liberalism face fewer risks of breakdown because they can collaborate and negotiate to resolve conflict, since they can see themselves as equal collaborators and not competitors in the balance of power.

However, this approach does not aim to romanticize liberal peacebuilding, especially in the Pan-African context. The approach adopted in this paper recognizes the shortfalls of the minimalist contentions to peacebuilding. The latter often emphasize peaceful electoral power transitions, constitutionalism, and respect for human rights where civil society (including faith actors) are given a safe space,

through limited political interference, for active participation in political processes leading to peaceful elections and democratic installations. The downside of this minimalistic contention is that it is characterized by institutional failure where critical institutions are invaded by personal greed and ambitions at the expense of the people necessitating the need to go beyond the minimalist view by adopting a maximalist approach. The maximalist approach considers other historical and contextual variables that help midwife democratic transitions through periodic elections found in Pan-African traditions and a locally inspired application of empirical knowledge in democracy, governance and peacebuilding also known as "The local Turn" (Wolf, 2022). This includes peacebuilding measures such as mediation, bipartisan talks, dialogue, power sharing, Government of National Unity and Broad-Based Government. When this happens, then the conversation moves to critical post-colonial questions of inclusivity (especially economic inclusivity), addressing marginalization, ethnicity, representation, citizenship and belonging.

The local turn brings to the fore the need to maximize local knowledge for peace in support for democratic transition through institutional designs that speak to the African reality. Kenya, for example, has been known to survive on handshake politics since the 2007/08 post-election violence. The thinking behind a Pan-African theoretical approach is to transform both the research and the practice of international peacebuilding with the aim of incorporating views, experiences, and practices from the Global South. This will help overcome the predominance of Northern and Western concepts and templates in the practice and scholarship of international peace operations (Wolf, 2022). Prioritizing local efforts, processes, and solutions in peacebuilding efforts, as opposed to liberal peacebuilding approaches that celebrate conventional manifestations of liberal democracy, are critical in overcoming the predominance of Western concepts in the imagination of Africa. Local faith actors play a critical role in peacebuilding and governance, demonstrating the active pursuit of Kant's desire for perpetual peace and revolving around moral questions such as the "free will" of humanity and the pursuit of peace as a lifetime endeavor (individually and collectively). This paper appraises the contribution of faith actors to this end.

The contribution of faith actors in democracy and governance comes at a time when liberal peacebuilding is threatened by the emergence of illiberalism and populist authoritarian regimes (Mutua, 2023) (age of the

strongman or dictators) in Africa and elsewhere. Illiberalism makes holes in Fukuyama's 1992 *The End of History* scholarly contribution that claimed that Western liberal democracy is the ultimate form of human governance. The claims of *The End of History* relied on the *Democratic Peace Theory*, a notion largely sustained by the United Nations paradigm that lasted for over seventy years. Growing pessimism toward this theory, and the beginning of liberal democracy's turnaround, emerged following the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States, which rendered the US more rigid and absolute in its foreign policy and domestic affairs' (Crane 2022). The turnaround led to the intellectual crisis of Western rationalism.

Clearly, liberal democracy lacked the proper mechanism to defend itself as a governing mechanism, a shift sensed by politicians around the world who began to turn to nationalism and populism as an alternative to democracy (Löfflmann, 2019). Today, liberal democracy is being challenged in all fronts by strongmen who seek a more controlled nationalistic governance in the United States, Europe, North America and Africa (Crane 2022). This could explain the recent governance problems that have sparked protests in countries like Kenya and a wave of electoral conflicts in many countries in Africa agitating for more rights through mass protests especially around civil liberties and electoral justice (Ogenga & Gamez, 2025).

In recent years, vibrant bodies of African scholarship have emerged, examining the application of democratic governance and peacebuilding in African contexts. Aubyn (2022) notes the proliferation of courses at African universities, academic journals, conferences, and research institutes dedicated to conflict and peacebuilding in Africa. Over the past two decades, a growing number African scholars of peace and conflict have pointed to the shortcomings of Western-led liberal peacebuilding approaches: namely, the imposition of a "one-size-fits-all" approach to peace, disconnected from local cultures, traditions, and social structures, has proven to not only be unsustainable in building peace, but capable of exacerbating tensions and conflict (Aubyn, 2022).

African scholars of peacebuilding have called for more contextualized and localized approaches to peacebuilding, with some highlighting the need to amplify and mainstream indigenous African approaches to peacebuilding, such as open assembly, oath, covenant making, and the use of traditional councils involving elders and clan leaders (Ejike, 2022). Aubyn (2022) notes that despite the rich literature on peacebuilding advanced by African scholars, African scholars have

not offered anything qualitatively different from their counterparts elsewhere, since most of them were educated according to Western academic scholarship traditions. Yet, a survey of the literature has found renewed investigations into indigenous governance and peacebuilding mechanisms, with a view to mainstream them into peacebuilding practices across the continent (Ejike, 2022).

These calls are situated within the broader movement of decolonization, of decentralizing Western approaches in favor of indigenous traditions, with some scholars highlighting that the roots of many conflicts in the African continent can be found in colonial legacies of violence, exploitation, and political and social divisions (Genger, 2022). Ejike (2022), highlights the need to return to African traditional religions to identify contextually appropriate governance and peacebuilding mechanisms, while Genger (2020) speaks to the unifying power of concepts like *Ubuntu* (humanity) in advancing African-led discourses on peacebuilding and governance (Genger, 2020). "The local turn" emphasized in this paper brings to the fore local infrastructure for peace in support for democratic installation through institutional designs that speak to the African context (Wolf 2022). This also means that faith actors, as local members of the civil society, play a critical role in advancing and implementing indigenous and local approaches to peacebuilding and governance as later demonstrated in this paper by the works of Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative and National Church Council of Kenya.

Genger (2020) calls on African scholars to lead knowledge production efforts on indigenous approaches in partnership with local communities. Partnering with communities can help close the gap between the current, dominant African literature on peacebuilding, which is still rooted in Western norms (and yet fails to influence Western policy), and the need to use local evidence to guide the implementation and mainstreaming of indigenous approaches to peacebuilding (Genger, 2020). Genger (2020) argues that African scholars equally need to work closely with African policymakers to support knowledge production forums such as seminars, workshops, and conferences to ensure research is translated into practice.

Methodological Approach

The paper utilized a qualitative methodological approach that involved desk and document analysis of literature on faith, peacebuilding and

governance, and key informant interviews in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The desk literature included academic journal articles, books and book chapters, and various research project reports. At least five key informants were interviewed in each country. The informants consisted of academics, faith actors, members of the civil society, and state agents/policy makers who were purposively sampled to fit into the objectives of the study and therefore accounted for a sufficient representation of the sample size given that the study was qualitative in nature. Respondents were provided with consent forms before they engaged in the interviews.

Themes raised in the analysis of the corroborated qualitative data (desk and institutional analysis, case studies and key informant interviews) from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania included political influence, partisanship and financial constraints, collaboration and coordination mechanisms and therefore the data analysis had reached a point of saturation (Naeem, Ozuem, Howel & Ranfagni, 2024). There was contention in the analysis that further observation of data will not lead to discovery of more information related to the research questions other than what has been analyzed in the context of semantic debates regarding what constitutes saturation and how to reach it, a subject that remains contentious (perhaps an acceptable inevitable bias in the study). The methodological approach was appropriate considering the subject of inquiry (faith) and the object (governance and peacebuilding) analysis which centered on unmasking intangible aspects of social phenomena such as prevailing attitudes and emotions, behavior and belief systems that would otherwise prevent different stakeholders in faith and peacebuilding from generating knowledge and collaborating.

The study examined 17 key documents to map evidence concerning the role of faith actors in peacebuilding and governance in East Africa. The examination also established the extent to which literature about faith, peacebuilding and governance in East Africa is local. The study also interviewed at least five key informants in each target country of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda between the months of September and November 2022. Informants included faith actors, members of civil society organizations, and state agents or policy makers. Some of the limitations included resource constraints, poor cooperation at the regional level and delayed feedback from respondents. Nevertheless, the findings corroborated hypotheses related to key questions regarding local evidence production, collaboration, financial constraints, political/state interference, partisanship, and capacity building.

Local Evidence Generation

In terms of evidence generation, the desk analysis established that there were indeed more local authors than foreign authors, but evidence was significantly dominated by faith actors. This could have been due to the methodological approach that prioritized the work of faith actors in evidence mapping and analysis, as opposed to peacebuilders generally. This implied that it narrowed the search parameter to "the academic contribution of evidence limited to faith actors", as opposed to academic literature in general. A deeper dive into existing evidence revealed significant collaboration between faith actors and faith-based institutions than with other stakeholders and consequently, exposed the varying levels of collaboration between faith actors and other non-faith institutions such as academia, civil society, and policy makers in peacebuilding and governance. For example, there was limited collaboration noted between faith actors and academics, despite the importance of such cooperation, and significantly low collaboration with civil society. However, the paper contends that since policy makers are more of the end users of evidence than producers, they may often be involved in the process of evidence generation, for example, as key informants or even reviewers than evidence generators. Nevertheless, most of the evidence was produced by local authors, bringing to the fore the centrality of the call for local turn in contemporary peacebuilding interventions going forward.

Local Actors, Local Turn?

Local actors (faith actors included) dominated evidence production in East Africa with minimal collaboration between faith actors, civil society and academics, presenting a possible gap in practical application of the needed holistic approach to interventions. Desk literature equally reveals the absence of policy makers in collaborative initiatives, as shown in figure 1, which could account for the limited practical interventions on the ground informed by local recommendations. Further, literature revealed faith, peacebuilding and governance challenges as a result of political interference in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. It was also established that an unfavorable policy environment is most likely to negatively impact the role of faith in peacebuilding and governance in East Africa (see Kaiso, 2018; Latigo and Ochola, 2015; Ntale, 2019; Githigaro, 2012). Therefore, faith actors predominantly contribute to peacebuilding and governance at the institutional rather than individual

level, a contention that can however not be generalized. For example, most of the work of faith actors is attributed to institutions like the Joint Christian Council, the Muslim Center for Justice and Law and the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI).

The literature also revealed different intellectual traditions between the faith community and the academic community (e.g., Hallimu and Mbugua 2021). Faith actors double as academics to produce evidence in collaboration with other academics locally and internationally as noted in the paper, "Persistent Inter-ethnic Hostility and Its impacts on Socio-economic Livelihood along Kisumu-Nandi Borderline" co-authored by Rev. Dr. Patrick Devine and Arthur Magero Abonyo (2020). The paper focused on conflict resolution and reconciliation to highlight the dilemma of isolating faith actors in evidence production because in some cases, faith actors play a dual role as civil society/ non-profit entities such as: Catholic Relief Services, World Council of Churches, and Global Network of Religion on Children. This complex, yet special relationship between actors calls for close collaboration to avoid disjointed knowledge generation and dissemination going forward.
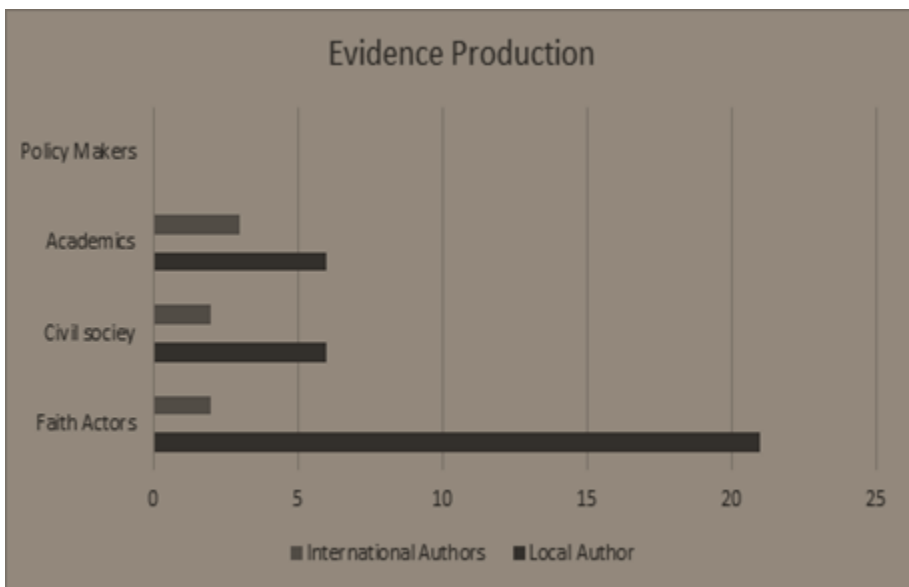

Figure 1 Policy makers were conspicuously missing in the evidence examined.

Evidently, the problem is therefore not the lack of local evidence but the disjointed production of evidence, and consequently, implementation of

recommendations from the said evidence to influence local peacebuilding and governance (Githigaro, 2012; Hallimu and Mbugua, 2011; Latgo and Ochola, 2015; Mbila, 2018; Kaiso, 2018). In cases where international authors and institutions produce evidence, they do so often because of the assumption that there are technical skill shortages and capacity challenges for peacebuilding and governance locally coupled with financial challenges that restrict local faith actors from building local sustainable infrastructures for peace (Alken, 2005; Divine & Abonyo, 2020; Elfversson, 2016; LPI, 2010; WFDD, 2015). Therefore, local approaches (or the local turn, or grassroots peacebuilding interventions) are executed in an environment of competing interests and agencies that need to be balanced for a smooth overlap, otherwise the local risk being compromised or swallowed while seeking inroads into formally recognized national and international faith and peacebuilding architectures.

There appears to be an attempt to foreground faith-based local peacebuilding approaches in a constrained environment. For example, financial constraints or political pressures demand that local approaches be linked to broader national and international peacebuilding structures represented by government institutions locally, and donor agencies internationally, as well as other stakeholders like academics, civil society, and policy makers. Therefore, faith-based interventions are yet to achieve their full potential in peacebuilding and governance in the region owing to financial, political and structural constraints as revealed through Key Informant Interviews.

Role of Faith Actors in Peacebuilding and Governance

Key Informant Interviews (KII) revealed the attitudes and perception of faith actors, academics, civil society members and policy makers or state officials regarding peacebuilding and governance in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. While it was easier to get faith actors, academics and civil society members to respond to questions regarding the role of faith actors in peacebuilding, and governance, it was particularly challenging to get hold of policy makers or government officials to comment on the issue, echoing one of the key concerns (political will) regarding the involvement of policy makers in the work of faith and peacebuilding.

Central to the absence of policy makers is the idea of political interference. Often, faith actors cited political interference from government officials and politicians who ought to create safe spaces for

faith and peacebuilding work. This implies that policy makers are out of touch with the centrality of the work of faith and peacebuilding emphasizing the need for knowledge exchange through collaboration. Evidence revealed that critical stakeholders are operating in silos, limiting their contribution in peacebuilding, as demonstrated in the works of Patrick Devine and Magero Abonyo (2020) and those of Shauri Hallimu and Patrick Mbugua (2011) respectively. There is a remarkable consensus that holistic collaborative and coordinated mechanisms is required in evidence generation, capacity building and knowledge production to avoid duplication and, above all, mobilize the much-needed resources for peacebuilding in the context of financial constraints.

The latter also emerged as one of the most crucial challenges in the work of faith, peacebuilding, and governance in East Africa (Ntale, 2019; Mbila, 2008; Githigaro, 2012). Therefore, key informants further revealed the opportunities and challenges these critical stakeholders face in peacebuilding and governance work and provided practical measures that can be potentially adopted to support efforts towards faith, peacebuilding, and governance such as partnership between government, faith actors and civil society to reduce political interference (Latigo and Ochola, 2015).

Further, they advised on the need to have a proper policy framework that guides cooperation between faith actors and government officials and political leaders in the spirit of mutual respect and separation of powers between state and religion. Regarding accusations that faith actors are partisan, it was observed that sometimes faith actors fail to be objective about their support for various contentious political issues for selfish reasons. Partisanship often interferes with public perception about their neutrality in the communities they serve, eroding public trust and negatively affecting their peacebuilding efforts. There was a consensus that faith actors should rely on research not only to implement practical interventions, but to also work flexibly with academics, policy makers and civil society groups in their efforts to produce evidence. However, it is the fact that faith actors have limited capacity to document their work or perhaps even conduct research that calls for collaboration to build their capacity to document the work that they do and be able to find appropriate channels to communicate the impact that the evidence has on grassroots communities. This, they opined, could be achievable through training courses, workshops, policy dialogues to mainstream their work and position them as champions of peacebuilding and governance.

Faith Actors at the Forefront of Peacebuilding and Governance

Faith actors are at the forefront of peacebuilding and governance, and have practically contributed to humanitarian support, lobbying for various legislations, electoral support and observation, youth and women empowerment programs, construction of facilities such as schools, health services and churches, rehabilitation programs as well as spiritual nourishment through their daily roles of preaching the gospel to communities across the board as demonstrated in the following KII excerpt from Uganda.

> *"Faith actors contribute to humanitarian support, lobbying for various legislations, electoral support and observation, youth and women empowerment programs, construction of facilities such as schools, health services and churches, rehabilitation programs as well as spiritual nourishment through their daily roles of preaching the gospel to communities across the board."*

Faith institutions and actors play two key roles in peacebuilding and governance. They generate evidence and implement programs doubling as academics and championing locally-led peacebuilding interventions based on evidence.

Promoting Peace through Interfaith Dialogue

As much as the work of faith actors is constrained by resources, structural challenges and political interference, they have emerged as leading defenders of human rights and democracy globally. Democracies are bound to exploit the strength of civic liberty through encouraging participation in creating united federations that shun conflict through working together (Aubyn, 2020). Local faith actors have been in the lead towards promoting such efforts through peace and interfaith dialogue. They have created stability during fragile times in countries like South Africa, through the works of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to East Africa through works of Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and National Church Council of Kenya (NCCK) as shown in the following response from Uganda.

> *"Faith actors can play a vital role in peace building and create stability in situations of fragility and conflict. A most famous example is, of course, Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was a role model for peace and reconciliation in post-Apartheid South Africa. Other examples are the religious leaders of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) in Northern Uganda which helped in bringing peace."*

As has been observed, transitional political economy in Africa harbors ideological challenges related to democracy, rule of law and governance often marred by pockets of violence, leading to shaky democratic installations and a "winner takes all" system of governance. Despite these challenges, The National Church Council of Kenya has, over the years, championed peacebuilding efforts in Kenya from the onset of multi-party democracy in the 1990s. For example, they supported the repeal of section 2A of the constitution that brought about a multi-party system and worked towards the restoration of peace in Kenya in the aftermath of the 2007/08 post-election violence as shown in the following response from Kenya.

> *"Faith Actors act as mediators and advocates for peace and reconciliation through interfaith dialogues that help diffuse tensions that might lead to conflict escalation… Faith actors have promoted reconciliation, facilitate citizen learning through civil education..."*

Restoration of Public Trust

Faith actors therefore help restore eroding public trust in democratic governance in Africa due to the consequences of misgovernance, which has led to other widespread problems such as violent extremism, corruption, and marginalization. In Uganda, for example, faith actors have been involved in peacebuilding by bringing different religious factions together as stated in the following KII response in Uganda:

> *"Faith actors play key roles in building peace among the various Muslim factions that we have e.g. in Uganda the various conflicts among the Muslim community have been addressed by the faith actors."*

As special agents for the realization of the new agenda for peace, faith actors have over the years, championed the key pillars of this agenda which is human rights, justice, and inclusivity as evidence in the following response from Tanzania:

> *"First and foremost, in the peace building aspect; faith actors advocate for equality of all humankind, with that due course, they mediate during conflicts through spreading the gospel of unity in times of political turmoil, civil wars..."*

Unifying Communities into a New Agenda for Peace

Faith actors understand the value of unity among communities (*Ubuntu*) and nations, and the need to be inclusive and to protect human rights. They therefore use their spiritual influence anchored on the belief in one

God to help create "the new agenda for peace" that would ensure a more peaceful and prosperous society, making them central players in governance and peacebuilding, as further noted in the following excerpts from Tanzania.

> *"Faith actors preach about unity among populations, and this has created peace in a number of regions; the influence of faith actors has seen a number of peacekeeping missions established in war torn areas such as Somalia …Faith actors preach unity in different religions, they want people to understand that no matter the different faiths, religions we all have one ALMIGHTY GOD."*

> *"In governance, FBOs have engaged in multiple activities with various governments such as participation in election processes through playing a role in election observations during election times. They also advocate for rule of law in various states*

> *They also write to governments in case of any unjustifiable cause that doesn't not go well with humanity e.g. is the case of torture of humankind in various states by state authorities…"*

Mediation and Human Rights Protection

In addition, faith actors have supported various initiatives in collaboration with the government to help create opportunities for victims of conflict, which is unarguably a human rights protection effort, as shown by the following response from Kenya:

> *"Faith actors have been key in peace building by ensuring peace in society through various ways; creating reconciliation forums in times of conflicts, advocating for unity among Christians and Muslims. They also play a big role in mediation processes both in courts of law and outside the courts of law. In the governance aspect, faith actors advocate for honesty, integrity among leaders in big offices… They foster better rule of law by not being partisan in govt decisions and in that they push for human rights for the masses."*

Faith actors play a critical role in peacebuilding and governance in East Africa as demonstrated through the cited examples of their contributions in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania and therefore their roles should be appraised for peacebuilding and governance in the region.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that there is a significant amount of local evidence on faith, peacebuilding and governance but no convincing evidence on adoption of recommendations at the policy and practical level due to a

disjointed evidence generation and collaboration mechanism by critical stakeholders. Policies that support the work of faith actors and protect them from political interference, as well as a financial lifeline for the work of faith in peacebuilding and governance, should be formulated and implemented with urgency. When proper coordination and funding mechanisms are in place, they can help maximize existing financial resources by avoiding duplication of efforts and interventions.

Indeed, financial constraints are a serious challenge in the work of faith actors in peacebuilding and governance. Securing new funding resources and effectively managing limited financial resources characterized by shrinking donor capacity is a major step towards addressing collaboration deficits and consequently, the skills, awareness and therein knowledge gap discussed in this paper. More collaborations are recommended in the form of networks and consortiums in the work of faith, peacebuilding, and governance for knowledge exchange. Good examples of such cooperations are found in initiatives such as the Joint Learning Initiative's *(JLI) East Africa Hub on Faith and Local Communities* and the *Hidden Peacebuilders Network*. Such high-level cooperation can help in coordination of peacebuilding work across multiple geographic spaces, and in leveraging locally available infrastructures to build capacity of local and international actors and maximize limited resources to increase the impact of locally driven interventions.

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