



ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN EAST AFRICA.

Joint Partnership between Arigatou International GNRC and Goldin Institute

*** Quarter Report (Jan-March) 2015 ***

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Acronyms

AIN	:	Arigatou International Nairobi
CVE	:	Countering Violent Extremism
FCA	:	Finn Church Aid
GI	:	Goldin Institute
GNRC	:	Global Network of Religions for Children
KMYA	:	Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance
KCIS	:	Kenya College of Islamic Studies
NRTP	:	Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organizations
DR	:	Desk Review

1.0 Introduction and Background

Following various terror attacks linked to different militant groups, an uncountable number of youths have been seen recruited into extremist groups around the globe. The East Africa has been considered as a hotspot to many for such activities. Over the past five years the infamous Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group active in East Africa, expanded, and became more vicious, increasingly getting more brutal, and trying to trigger violent conflict between Muslims and Christians in the region. Parents in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Somali, have reportedly been had complaining about their children fleeing to Somalia to join the Al-Shabaab. Arigatou International GNRC and Goldin Institute (GI), extended its partnership to address these issues.

2.0 Work Progress

With support from the Arigatou International (AI) and Goldin Institute (GI), various activities were implemented to support East African communities.

2.1 Building Community Strategies on CVE- lessons learned from Kenya and Somalia.

24 participants from different organizations in Kenya attended the two day training on the lessons learned from Kenya and Somalia's past history in relations to violence. The workshop, took place at Pride Inn Hotel, Westland's Nairobi on 14th and 15th of January 2015.

The workshop sought to collect practitioners from local grass root and global level to discuss lessons learnt and plan together how to support better community's strategies on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE); especially from Kenya and Somalia. The workshop aimed to serve each participant's own planning needs by creating space of sharing and learning from others. Special focus was given to learn how to support youth and women involvement in building the community's strategies. The workshop targeted at capturing policy advice to be provided to national authorities and global organizations. It also aimed to connect CVE to reconciliation, mediation and dialogue initiatives that aim to address the communities' grievances and exclusion.

At the end of the workshop, community's response proved to be the most effective way to prevent violent extremism. Participants came to an understanding that Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) will be the epicentre of restoration and

strengthening of the values and principles of individuals and societies against violence and its related activities. The training effectively captured the underlying causes and grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremism; it also created an integral solution for these problems.

2.2 Youth and Radicalization

In today's world, the youth are the most vulnerable and easy target towards many practices such as; radicalization. In a research carried out by Arigatou International GNRC, it was realized that majority of the members in extremist groups are usually young adults between 19 to 35 years. They become an easy target because this is the point where a person discovers himself or herself and may lack a proper stand in various things thus becoming vulnerable.

Both the Goldin Institute and Arigatou International-Nairobi (AIN), saw the essence of youth and radicalization to be included as a major topic in the workshops. The subject proved to be a success in the three workshops around Kenya: - West-lands, East-Leigh and Mombasa Workshop, where participants opened up to this disturbing issue.

The program advocated for awareness and sensitization through speaking to leaders/pioneers of crime and violence by convincing and shaping their perception towards the activities they carry out. Media was also pointed as an important sensitization and informative tool towards the current generation in fighting against radicalization; in the 21st century more people get adopted to the modern technology which makes them an easy target to radical messages, hence using the same media to counter radicalization.

In the Mombasa Workshop, attendants were taught on creating other livelihoods which are better and beneficial than violence. They were also trained on the value of provision of trauma healing through psychological support to the victims of war and violence.

To begin the process of countering radicalization, participants exploited the concepts of seeking justice to the victims of violence and the possible punishment to the actors of war, types of reconciliation, and the different agreements that parties can enter into in a reconciliation process. The need to promote the value of an individual's life against the repetition of past negative events that have destroyed our environment along with the loss of humankind was emphasized in the workshops.

2.3 Nairobi East-Leigh Workshop.

It is evident that the dominant religion in East-Leigh Nairobi area is Islam. And for the past one year the government and various external agencies have been closely tracking the activities in the area. This is because there are speculations that link the Somalis in East-Leigh to the infamous terror group, Al-Shabaab. The residents in the region who are found to have ties with the terror group, have found themselves in hands of the law from time to time.



Participants from the CRAVE workshop taking part in an InterFaith group discussion. Right: Rev. Nyabera (Arigatou International, Director IECP) spearheading discussions in the Christian group.

The trainees in East-Leigh agreed that their region is among the most affected places in the country on the issue of radicalisation, and if the problem is not solved and put into urgent consideration then it may worsen. The participants agreed to open up to better ways of solving cases and problems other than opting to violence as the absolute solution, as it leads to destruction.

In addition to that, AI taught the East-Leigh community on the essence of associating and working with the government. It was pointed out to them that shunning from the law and hiding criminals may impose great damage to the society at

large in the near future. The attendants were also taught on the values of safeguarding the children against exploitation and violence extremism. At the end of the workshop, the area residents felt empowered and agreed to put the knowledge acquired into practise and also disseminate it to their subsequent public.

2.4 Mombasa Training Program.

With the aid of the Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance (KMYA) and the Kenya College of Islamic Studies (KCIS), AI was able to execute the goals and objectives of the workshop effectively. For the participants to comprehend the entire two day training program, they first had to know the relevance and the purpose of the meeting so as to tackle their immediate present. Mombasa was among the hotspots that radical/extremist groups target in spreading their ideologies, power and monarchy. And thus, many youth get swamped by this act unknowingly. Over a period of four consecutive years now, parents having been had to have been mourning over the joining of their children's into terrorist groups such as: Al-Shabaab because of exposure towards extreme radicalism.

After the first day of training, participants agreed that they truly did have a problem and they were ready to solve. The residents of Mombasa realised that untrustworthiness, lack of peace and respect amongst each other are among the main factors that influence violence between different faiths in the region. To begin the process of letting go of the darker past, the group were trained on the art of forgiveness and reconciliation. Participants were helped to understand that offenses damage long-held values and principles instilled in the society; and for any restorative process to occur, one must realise the fundamental core problem so as to tackle the disturbing issue.

AI outlined the need to establish a strong peace conservation platform so as to promote harmony and avoid negative and violent exploitation.

The second day of the training even made the group to appreciate interfaith based activities much more; because through the tour to various worship places in the area, the participants had an opportunity to understand, appreciate and learn new things from other faiths that united and established respect among themselves. The trainees were thrilled with the two day workshop that they proposed for such initiatives to be carried out often.



Above: Religious leaders, AI members and workshop Participants taking a group photograph to project peace and unity.

2.5 Desk Review

The Community Resilience Against Violence Extremism initiative (CRAVE), which is an Interfaith program of the AI, has carried out many training programs to different audiences in the East Africa with the sole purpose of eradicating violence and radicalisation. This goes hand in hand in empowering and safe guarding the children, who are the future pioneers and leaders of tomorrow. The joint force of AI and GI carried out a desk review to analyze to what extent violence extremism affects people; and specific review of how violence changes a person and his surroundings. Some of the review subjects included: - 1. Understanding Violence Extremism;

2. Pioneers of Extremism;

3. Indicators of violence and Insecurity;

4. Causes and Drivers of Violence Extremism;

5. Preventive measures in Countering Violence Extremism (CVE);

6. Reconciliation and Reintegration processes.

Participants in the various CRAVE programs also proposed a number of aspects that they felt could spear-head the CRAVE workshops;

- ❖ *Equality among all citizens:* It was recommended that for justice to take place, the government should not be biased in investigating all its people and not target certain communities or religion(s) as key suspects. They also recommended that the government should practice strenuous investigations before having unclear allegations and claims.
- ❖ *Cooperation with the law:* It was emphasized that the society should work hand in hand with managers of law so as to promote security and peace among themselves; and that the people should not hide the culprits but instead expose them.
- ❖ *More time for Training:* Due to the Productive knowledge being aired out in the workshops, the audience proposed for more time to be added in learning. They also advocated for frequency of such Programs to be carried out to create sufficient awareness in the society.
- ❖ *Increase Interfaith Interaction:* During the second day of the interfaith tour, participants got exposed to different religions and their teachings; which created a positive perception completely opposite from what they had heard about other faiths. Thus, it was seen productive for more interfaith tours to be enacted so as to boost the minds of the participants towards positive cohesion among different faiths.
- ❖ *Peacebuilding and youth empowerment:* Arigatou International sees the need for peace and reconciliation process between individuals from various faiths. For this to happen, the Global Network of Religions for Children puts the youth as the epicentre of the empowerment program. This is because nurturing the young generation will create a framework stability and unity in the future, and obscene ideologies like discrimination can be truly forgotten.