

The Network for
Religious and
Traditional
Peacemakers



Year in Review 2020



Greetings of Peace

2020 has been largely characterized by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Now more than ever we recognize the crucial role of collaboration for achieving global sustainable peace. Throughout 2020, the Network worked to enable its members and supporters to continue their peacebuilding work while responding to the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a peace actor, the Network is increasingly paying attention to a possible “crisis after the crisis.” The combination of health, economic and social pressure in countries with fragile stability may easily translate into renewed conflict. The Network’s core competence of understanding the intersection of religion and peace, enabling actors to unite efforts to sustain peaceful societies and understanding how inclusivity may become an asset in sustaining peace is needed more than ever – especially in this rapidly changing global crisis.

In the midst of dealing with a global viral pandemic, the pandemic of institutional injustices resurfaced across the United States and around the world. In immediate response, the Network explored and promoted the transformative role of religious and traditional leaders in supporting peace and changing oppressive systems around the world. Now, more than ever, their voices are needed within their local communities to create unifying messages of solidarity and understanding. When communities collectively speak for love, truth and justice, communities stand against systemic exclusion and suppression and allow nations to strive for a world of sustainable peace. We, along with our Members and Supporters and grassroots actors, will continue to explore collaboration broadly in order to play our role in resolving this global crisis.

Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi

Executive Director

2020 IN NUMBERS

87

Small grants awarded to grassroots peacemakers

24

Secretariat members based in 7 countries

70

Global Members & Supporters

18

#SociallyDistantTownHall's

9

Active Consortia's

35

Members and Supporters supporting Consortia's

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

In their work around the globe, Network members and supporters have responded to the new challenges posed by the pandemic for fostering peaceful and inclusive societies.

South & South East Asia: AHA! Awareness with Human Action project was initiated to strengthen the response efforts of the COVID-19 pandemic by preventing conflict and building social cohesion.

Kenya: Religious Minorities in Kenya: Overcoming Divides, Respecting Rights project is supporting religious actors to respond to the pandemic through training, production and dissemination of IEC materials, radio and TV programs.

Somalia: Prominent Somali and Somali diaspora figures and authorities worked together to spread correct information on COVID-19, to counter the disinformation and to give guidance on how to practice social distancing and other precautionary measures while abiding by one’s religion.

The UN Mediation Support Unit and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers hosted several Brown Bag discussions between grassroots actors and UN personnel focusing on the UN Secretary General’s call for a global ceasefire.

Despite the challenges in light of COVID-19, we have seen the global community unite to support and encourage one another, especially during holy celebrations, such as Easter and Passover. To continue the tradition of holiday celebration, the Network hosted its annual iftar in a virtual capacity. This event brought interfaith communities together to discuss values that unite our communities, particularly during difficult times, such as this.

The Network developed guidance and reference documents on COVID-19 for religious and traditional actors and devised a creative means to convene grassroots religious and traditional actors with the broader Peacemakers Network through hosting a series of Socially Distant Town Halls on topics such as “The Role of Women and Youth in Somalia during COVID-19” and “Combating Stereotypes and Misinformation.”



Supporting Grassroots Efforts for Sustainable Peace

Africa

Supporting the development and implementation of the Somalia National Reconciliation Framework

In 2020, the project has supported conflict analysis and needs assessment of women peacemakers across Somalia, the development of implementation plans for the NRF in the Federal Member States, strategic communication, promotion of peace and reconciliation through online platforms, promotional materials and documentaries. The project has also sought to respond to the COVID pandemic through engagement with religious and traditional actors (see COVID-19).

Overcoming divides and advancing the rights of religious minorities in Kenya

A virtual conference was held amongst key stakeholders and community members to explore the realities of religious minorities in Kenya and solutions to related issues, as well as the future of religious minorities in the country ahead of the 2022 ballot.



Europe & MENA

Research and analysis to better inform policymakers about ways to prevent violence

This year the EU-funded consortia project, Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism through Community Resilience in the Balkans and MENA (PAVE), began research to examine the root causes and driving factors of radicalisation. In October, the first of a series of stakeholder meetings was held in Northern Macedonia as part of efforts to strengthen local ownership of the project findings.

Reach Out project highlighted as part of the reported best practices in the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate's (CTED) evaluation of Finland's counter-terrorism and PVE measure

Reach Out work supports local and national stakeholders, authorities, civil society actors and faith communities to better address needs of families and individuals affected by radicalization and extremism.

The consortium project Religious minorities in Kenya: Overcoming divides, respecting rights (RMP) promoted and advocated for the protection of human rights during the pandemic through production of radio shows, short video clips and social media messages by religious actors.

South & Southeast Asia

Enhancing local capacities to address discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief

The Southeast Asia: Advancing Inter-Religious dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief (SEA-AIR) project provides financial support to Fellows through small grants to design peaceful coexistence actions in the region.

Contributing to the response efforts of the COVID-19 pandemic by preventing conflict and building social cohesion in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and broader South Asia.

To-date, three in-country and one regional communication campaigns have been implemented to promote awareness of COVID-19 and constructive narratives that reduce discrimination, hate speech, and stigmatization against specific communities, primarily targeting religious leaders, and women and youth leaders as community influencers. 50 grants have been awarded for grassroots actors to conduct localized peacebuilding initiatives throughout 2021.



SEA-AIR Interfaith Fellow, Sofia Jeana, works to rebuild trust among people of different religions in Pattani province by creating safe spaces for students from Buddhists and Islamic universities to come together and collaborate in youth-led community development projects.

Supporting youth-led initiatives for the prevention of violent extremism

The research phase of the Amplifying Leadership of Local Youth in Preventing Violent Extremism (ALLY) project began in August 2020 with the aim to increase understanding of how local youth-led initiatives contribute to prevention of violent extremism. The project works with young peacebuilders in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to promote the positive role young people play in PVE. Currently, 8 youth researchers have undergone research training and play a key role in data collection, analysis and reporting.

Collective Action for Sustainable Peace

Advancing the Role of Religious Actors at the UN

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the Multi-faith Advisory Council (MFAC) organized an online conference titled “Faith in the UN: Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations and looking to the future.” This event provided a platform for representatives of faith-based organizations (FBO), faith leaders and key voices of UN agencies to discuss a variety of pressing issues and their respective roles in dealing with them.

Understanding UN Plans of Action

The Network hosted an interactive discussion for SEA-AIR Interfaith Fellows with several distinguished UN representatives. UN Alliance of Civilizations High Representative H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos offered keynote remarks at the event, highlighting the importance of youth engagement to create and sustain peaceful societies. Subsequently, representatives from the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide briefed on their current interfaith and intercultural initiatives, including several plans of action.

Farewell to Mr. Adama Dieng

Over the past eight years, UN Under-Secretary General and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, has made significant strides towards advancing the role of the UN in genocide prevention while increasing UN engagement with religious and faith-based actors. In recognition of Mr. Dieng’s remarkable achievements, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, with the co- sponsorship of the permanent mission of Finland to the U.N., convened high-level government and UN officials and prominent religious and traditional actors from around the world to express their appreciation for Mr. Dieng’s contributions. This event was supported by friends at the United Nations and the Multi-Religious Steering Group, created by Mr. Dieng’s office at the United Nations.



Memorandum of Understanding Signed with Sudanese Ministry for Religious Affairs and Endowments

With a new environment in Sudan, religious actors are eager to increase their capacities in order to better serve their communities. As part of this effort, the Network attended a conference on Religious Freedom and Belief and Peaceful Co-existence, organized by the Sudan Ministry for Religious Affairs and Endowments, in Khartoum. The Network and the Sudan Ministry for Religious Affairs and Endowments signed an Memorandum of Understanding on collaboration to advance peace, reconciliation and inter-faith dialogue in Sudan and globally.



Youth Innovation to Prevent Violence

iDove aims to provide a youth-led platform for young peacebuilders to collaborate and foster creative approaches to preventing violent extremism (PVE) drawing on the soft power of religion. The 2020 Intercontinental Youth Forum participants looked at existing challenges in relation to implementing their work during COVID19. Participants worked in small groups to develop practical solutions to challenges, utilizing innovative tools and technologies.

Critical Role of Youth in Interfaith Solidarity

Three young peacemakers from different countries and diverse religious communities gathered for a virtual discussion to share lessons learnt from their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar entitled ‘Youth as Agents of Change’ showcased problems encountered and best practices developed over recent months in supporting interfaith solidarity by young interfaith experts.

"Always keep encouraging people to take part in the peacebuilding by making no limitation against their self-defined creativities and capabilities to be used as a highly-appreciated contribution for peace. Lead them to confidently admit that whatever talents they have will always be of great contribution to the making of peace, justice and human rights."

Fernando Sihotang, Indonesia



From "Western Education is Forbidden" to the Worlds Deadliest Terrorist Group: Education and Boko Haram in Nigeria

New research conducted by the Brookings Institution in partnership with the Network and its members in Nigeria, titled, From “Western Education is Forbidden” to the World’s Deadliest Terror Group: Education and Boko Haram in Nigeria. This research advances understanding for local support of Boko Haram and its relation to education in Nigeria.

International Day of Tolerance Celebration

In commemoration of the International Day of Tolerance, the Sultanate of Oman and Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers organized an interactive discussion among three youth and other relevant stakeholders to advance the understanding and contribution youth can provide towards further strengthening tolerance and dialogue, identify and understand youth-led strategies that promote mutual understanding among cultures and peoples provide avenues to explore how best practices can be translated in different contexts, learn from challenges, and develop concrete recommendations on how Member States, the United Nation, and civil society can support young people in affecting positive change.

2020 - 2025 Network Strategy Highlights

Priorities for 2020–2025

- Ensuring that the clarified Network structure enables the Network to fulfil its mission and serve its members and supporters
- Empowering local peacemakers and their respective communities; bridging international, regional, and local mediation and broader peacebuilding processes
- Strengthening the leadership of women and youth in religious and traditional peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes
- Supporting the positive role of religious and traditional actors in preventing violence at the local, regional, and international levels
- Creating opportunities and space for religious and traditional peacemakers to contribute to, and help shape, international policy frameworks that are relevant to conflict prevention and peace

Primary Approaches & Methods

Networking

Enhancing connections between Network members and supporters, with emphasis on collaboration among local, regional, and international level actors

Advocacy

Influencing relevant global norms and policies and contributing to their implementation by amplifying the voices of religious and traditional peacemakers and Network members

Research & Analysis

Analysis and research informing the actions of the Network and creation of an evidence base to promote the role of religious and traditional peacemakers and approaches to address conflicts with regional dimensions.

Training/ Capacity Building

Context-sensitive and needs-based capacity building of policymakers, practitioners, and peacemakers (including Network members and supporters)

Different Capacities, A Coordinated Effort

ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

A joint Advisory Group Meeting (AGM) will convene members and selected supporters for informal and open reflection, dialogue, networking and the planning of joint initiatives.

SUPPORTERS

Organisations and individuals that have the capacity and the desire to advance the Network's mission but that are unable to commit to membership are encouraged to contribute, based on their interests and capabilities.

THE SECRETARIAT

Under the supervision and with the guidance of the Steering Group and Members Assembly, the Network Secretariat will lead in implementing the Network's strategy.

STEERING GROUP

The Network Steering Group provides strategic guidance, oversees the Secretariat's work, and contributes to high-level advocacy on behalf of the Network's mission.

MEMBERS

Members have the right to vote, are eligible to serve on governing bodies, and can become priority candidates for project partnerships. Members will meet at least once a year in a Members Assembly to focus on governance and operational issues.

Modalities for Involvement



CONSORTIUMS

The Network creates consortiums that include both international organisations and local actors.



WORKING GROUPS

Network working groups provide vehicles for communication, planning, and knowledge exchange and can serve as the catalyst for joint activities and the financing of effective consortiums.



PLATFORMS

The Network supports local, regional, and thematic peer-support platforms relevant to religious and traditional peacemakers.