



The Network  
for Religious  
& Traditional  
Peacemakers



# Kenya National Consultation Report

Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) and the  
Localisation of the Marrakesh Declaration

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## ACRONYMS

FoRB	Freedom of Religions and Belief
FCA	Finn Church Aid
NRTP	The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
JISRA	Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action
KNHRC	Kenya National Human Rights Commission
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report highlights the findings, analysis, and strategic directions from the national consultation on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Kenya (FoRB), organised by Finn Church Aid (FCA) and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. The consultation assembled religious leaders, youth, women's groups, civil society, government representatives, human rights institutions, educators, and security actors to examine Kenya's FoRB realities and discuss how the Marrakesh Declaration can be effectively localised through a Kenya National Action Plan for 2026 to 2036.

Kenya is a deeply diverse society. It has a Christian majority nationally, alongside Muslim-majority regions in the Coast and Northeastern areas, where Christians are minorities, and significant Hindu and African traditional communities. This layered demography intersects with historical marginalisation, colonial-era arrangements such as the ten-mile coastal strip, land decisions made at the Lancaster Conference, and unequal investment in coastal and northern counties. These legacies have resulted in ongoing disparities in citizenship documentation, political representation, and access to services. Participants noted that although the Constitution contains strong guarantees in Articles 27, 32, and related provisions, the everyday experiences of many communities still reflect discrimination, insecurity, and exclusion.

The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action has played a key role in transforming this context and preparing Kenya for Marrakesh Phase Two. Over four years, Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) has built one of the most comprehensive interfaith infrastructures in the country. It enhanced doctrinal literacy and mediation skills among imams, pastors, priests, madrassa teachers, youth facilitators, and women mediators; established interfaith working groups and county-level mediation platforms; and supported youth as FoRB champions, digital literacy advocates, and narrative change actors. JISRA also developed curriculum materials and theological tools that integrate FoRB into local realities and collaborated closely with Finn Church Aid and NRTP to connect Kenyan insights to regional and global Marrakesh processes. These efforts have created a resilient ecosystem of relationships, skills, and practices that now form the backbone of Marrakesh Phase Two localisation.

Despite these advances, the consultation confirmed that Kenya faces serious and interconnected FoRB challenges. Discriminatory identity vetting continues to restrict access to documentation and full citizenship for many in coastal and northern counties. Tensions

between civil and Kadhi courts leave interfaith families uncertain about burial, inheritance, custody, and marital dissolution, often exposing widows, children, and converts to pressure or exploitation. Security measures following terror attacks, including mass arrests, mosque surveillance, profiling, and arbitrary detention, have damaged trust between Muslim communities and state institutions and reinforced a security-focused view of religion. Harmful narratives that depict Kenya as a Christian country, equate Islam with extremism, or misrepresent minority faiths, promote polarisation and justify exclusion. These narratives are amplified by media framing, digital misinformation, and geopolitical conflicts, often shaping youth perceptions and deepening suspicion.

The consultations also revealed gaps in the education system and institutional arrangements. Vague policies on dress codes, worship, clubs, and curricula in schools contribute to ongoing conflicts and misunderstandings surrounding religious rights. Women remain underrepresented in religious leadership and mediation, despite carrying significant burdens of caregiving and community reconciliation, and often facing specific FoRB violations. National institutions such as the Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC) and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) are limited by scarce resources, and there is no unified national system for reporting, monitoring, and learning from FoRB violations. These challenges collectively emphasise the need for a renewed, coherent national framework based on the Marrakesh principles of inclusive citizenship, mutual protection, and ethical leadership.

Learnings from the first phase of the Marrakesh Declaration demonstrate that FoRB is not an isolated issue but a foundation for peace, justice, and social cohesion. Kenya's participation in Marrakesh Phase One, supported by JISRA and NRTP, highlighted the importance of theological literacy programmes, regional and continental consultations, and the development of tools such as the Islam and FoRB Resource Guide. These experiences confirmed that when FoRB is violated through discriminatory documentation, securitisation, harmful narratives, the exclusion of minorities, or gendered marginalisation, trust in state institutions diminishes and intercommunal tensions increase. Conversely, when religious leaders are equipped with accurate scriptural knowledge, ethical frameworks, and spaces for collective reflection, they can become influential agents of inclusive citizenship and conflict transformation.

The report thus recommends a set of strategic actions for implementing Marrakesh Phase Two in Kenya, to be carried out through the attached Kenya Marrakesh National Action Plan 2026 to 2036. These recommendations advocate strengthening legal and policy bases for

FoRB, increasing theological literacy and ethical leadership across different traditions, institutionalising FoRB structures at county and community levels, raising public awareness and countering harmful narratives, creating a comprehensive monitoring and learning system, improving multi-stakeholder coordination, and prioritising the leadership of youth, women, and marginalised religious communities. By pursuing these priorities, Kenya can leverage its strong interfaith heritage, decentralised governance framework, vibrant civil society, and the JISRA-enhanced ecosystem to become a regional leader in the localisation of the Marrakesh Declaration and the development of peaceful, diverse societies.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Marrakesh Declaration provides a global, religiously grounded framework for strengthening Freedom of Religion or Belief, centred on justice, dignity, compassion, and inclusive citizenship. As the declaration enters Phase Two, the Marrakesh Roadmap outlines a ten-year agenda to support states in translating these principles into legal reforms, ethical leadership, community-level mechanisms, and nationally coordinated FoRB systems. Kenya's diverse religious demography and layered governance context make localisation essential, requiring an approach that grounds global commitments in Kenya's lived realities.

FCA and the NRTP, therefore, convened a national consultation to reflect collectively on Kenya's FoRB context and determine how the Marrakesh Roadmap can be adapted for national implementation. The consultation brought together county and national interfaith institutions, government officials, civil society networks, security agencies, human rights bodies, scholars, women's faith groups, and youth organisations. This diverse participation ensured that the roadmap would be discussed through a whole-of-society perspective, reflecting the Kenyan principle that a single sector cannot advance FoRB but must be co-owned across religious, civic, and governmental actors.

The agenda for the consultation was organised around the key elements of the Marrakesh Roadmap. Session One introduced the roadmap's purpose and global trajectory, highlighting its Phase One achievements and Phase Two priorities, such as expanding theological clarity, reinforcing citizenship-based rights protections, and encouraging inclusive governance. Participants explored how these priorities relate to Kenya's FoRB realities and pinpointed areas where localisation is needed. Session Two offered a detailed analysis of Kenya's FoRB situation, emphasising issues like securitisation, profiling, documentation obstacles, negative narratives, and poor public literacy, which should guide localisation efforts.

Session Three and the subsequent group work focused on how Kenya could operationalise the roadmap. Using the roadmap's guiding recommendations, curriculum integration and civic education, theological literacy, localised FoRB mechanisms, gender-transformative approaches, policy and legal mainstreaming, institutionalisation through faith councils, and strengthened monitoring and learning systems, participants explored country-specific pathways for implementation. Group discussions examined socio-political features that should shape localisation, identified legal and policy gaps the National Action Plan must address, analysed historical and contemporary drivers of tension, and reflected on how Islamic and interfaith theological legitimacy can reinforce inclusive citizenship narratives in Kenya.

Through this consultative approach, the national meeting ensured that the Kenya Marrakesh Roadmap was guided by both the global principles of the declaration and the practical experiences of Kenyan communities, institutions, and county-level actors. The consultation thus served as the essential first step in ensuring that Marrakesh Phase Two in Kenya is responsive, collaborative, and rooted in Kenya's unique FoRB landscape.

The insights from the consultation laid a clear foundation for exploring how Kenya can move the Marrakesh Roadmap from principles to practical action. With a shared understanding of Kenya's FoRB context, participants shifted from conceptual discussions to identifying specific structural, legal, theological, narrative, and community-level factors essential to localisation. The subsequent sections, therefore, present a comprehensive framework for adapting Marrakesh Phase Two to Kenya, highlighting the main challenges that need to be addressed, the assets that enable Kenya's successful implementation, and the pathways through which the Marrakesh values of justice, dignity, mercy, and inclusive citizenship can be integrated into national, county, and community systems.

## **2.0 LINKING JISRA TO MARRAKESH PHASE II**

The JISRA project, concluding in December 2025, established one of Kenya's most comprehensive and responsive interfaith infrastructures. Operating in a context shaped by longstanding Christian–Muslim mistrust, securitisation of Muslim communities, and politicised identity narratives, JISRA created platforms capable of addressing both structural and emerging barriers to FoRB. Its interventions directly responded to insights from national consultations, particularly the gap between constitutional guarantees in Articles 27 and 32 and the lived experiences of exclusion and discrimination reported across several counties.

Through structured capacity-building, JISRA strengthened the doctrinal, facilitation, and mediation skills of imams, priests, pastors, madrasa teachers, youth facilitators, and women mediators. These training sessions tackled concerns raised by stakeholders about religious illiteracy, scriptural misinterpretation, and the use of theological narratives to justify profiling or deepen mistrust. As a result, religious and community actors were better equipped to navigate sensitive identity-related disputes and counter-narratives that heighten local tensions.

JISRA's creation of interfaith working groups in counties with histories of marginalisation and resource-based conflict introduced a vital community-level mechanism for early warning, dispute resolution, and interreligious dialogue. Their effectiveness reflected

calls for stronger grassroots engagement, community ownership, and cooperation between local structures and state institutions. Women mediators, whose participation is often limited by cultural and institutional barriers, became key figures within these groups, highlighting the importance of inclusive approaches to de-escalate tensions and bolster social cohesion.

Youth also played a key role in JISRA's impact, emerging as FoRB champions, digital literacy advocates, and facilitators of narrative change. Their involvement was vital in a context where security incidents, media portrayal, and geopolitical influences continue to heighten suspicion between religious communities. Through digital outreach and community sensitisation, youth helped to counter misinformation, reframe misused Islamic terms, and promote evidence-based narratives, addressing a growing concern raised in consultations about the spread of harmful content via online platforms.

Additionally, JISRA contributed to Kenya's broader FoRB framework by developing curriculum materials, theological literacy tools, and participatory training guides that ground FoRB principles in real-life local contexts. These efforts support stakeholder recommendations for curriculum reform, early religious literacy, and enhanced capacity among media, academia, and faith institutions to counter harmful narratives and theological distortions. Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of comparative theological dialogue, such as aligning Marrakesh with traditions like *Nostra Aetate*, to strengthen shared responsibility for minority rights and challenge dominant narratives that marginalise non-majority faiths.

These achievements establish JISRA as a direct contributor to Marrakesh Phase II priorities. The programme has built a stronger network of trained religious leaders, youth influencers, and women mediators, which is an essential asset given documented barriers to women's participation in mediation and the need for more inclusive interfaith structures at both community and national levels. JISRA also developed contextualised theological resources, supported FoRB-sensitive dispute-resolution mechanisms, and fostered a culture of interreligious solidarity grounded in justice, dignity, mercy, and mutual respect, values highlighted throughout the consultations as fundamental to transforming Kenya's FoRB landscape.

As a result, Kenya advances to the Marrakesh Phase II with a strong interfaith ecosystem characterised by increased institutional trust, stronger operational capacity, greater community legitimacy, and doctrinal grounding. These enabling factors align with consultation insights, emphasising that constitutional protections, such as Articles 27, 32, and 56, remain under-implemented not due to legal flaws but because of gaps in awareness, practice, and local interpretation. The presence of empowered youth, capable faith leaders, improved mediation

structures, and enhanced grassroots literacy greatly boost Kenya's readiness to promote inclusive citizenship, challenge harmful narratives, and implement the Marrakesh principles at scale, significantly raising the chances of successful Phase II execution.

### **3.0 KENYA'S FoRB CHALLENGES**

Kenya's FoRB challenges are deeply rooted in historical, structural, legal, political, and social dynamics that continue to shape interreligious relations and perceptions of citizenship. Participants across consultations highlighted how colonial administrative design, including the 10-mile coastal strip arrangements, the Lancaster Conference land decisions, and the early marginalisation of Muslim-majority regions, produced long-term disparities in political representation, public investment, and recognition of minority rights. These patterns underpin the persistent inequities experienced in coastal and northern counties today. Discriminatory identity vetting, repeatedly cited as one of the most visible FoRB violations, continues to restrict access to foundational rights, mobility, documentation, and participation in national processes, despite recent political pronouncements aimed at reforming these practices.

Interfaith family law dilemmas, including inheritance disputes, burial arrangements, and marital dissolution, illustrate ongoing tensions between civil law and Islamic jurisprudence. Consultations noted the absence of harmonised guidance between secular and Kadhi courts, especially in cases involving intermarriage or religious reversion, which often leads to uncertainty, conflicting expectations, and social strain within families. Stakeholders underscored that widows, children, and converts are disproportionately affected due to weak legal interpretation, social pressure, and gaps in collaborative adjudication between the two systems.

Security-related practices were identified as some of the most damaging drivers of mistrust between Muslim communities and the state. Following major terror incidents, including the 1998 bombing, Westgate, and Dusit attacks, counterterrorism operations often relied on profiling, mass roundups, arbitrary arrests, and surveillance of mosques and religious spaces. These measures, together with historical incidents such as the Wagalla massacre, have entrenched perceptions of collective punishment and reinforced a security lens through which Muslim identity is viewed. Stakeholders noted that such practices undermine constitutional guarantees under Articles 27 and 32, fuel feelings of exclusion, and erode confidence in state institutions tasked with protecting FoRB.

Harmful and exclusionary narratives emerged as a recurring concern. Common tropes, including portraying Kenya as inherently a “Christian country,” conflating Islam with extremism, or stereotyping minority faiths such as Hindus and African traditional practitioners, reinforce social divides and inhibit equal citizenship. These narratives are further amplified by media framing, geopolitical conflicts, and the rapid spread of digital misinformation, which stakeholders warned has become a major channel for shaping youth perceptions and deepening polarisation. Without theological literacy and positive value-framing grounded in justice, dignity, and mutual respect, such narratives continue to distort interfaith understanding.

The education system remains another critical arena of FoRB contention. Consultations highlighted inconsistent school-level policies on dress codes, freedom of worship, religious clubs, and allocation of instructional time, partly due to ambiguities within the Education Act. Stakeholders called for clearer guidance and curriculum reforms that promote religious literacy from early childhood, noting that the absence of such reforms contributes to stereotyping and intra- and interfaith suspicion. The exclusion of women from mediation and formal religious leadership was also repeatedly raised, with participants emphasising the need to dismantle cultural and institutional barriers that limit women’s voices in FoRB-related decision-making processes.

Taken together, these challenges underscore the need for a renewed national framework, rooted in the Marrakesh Declaration’s principles of inclusive citizenship and mutual protection, that addresses structural inequities, improves legal and institutional coherence, counters divisive narratives, strengthens accountability mechanisms, and prioritises the protection of vulnerable groups. Such a framework would provide the foundation for transforming Kenya’s interreligious landscape and ensuring FoRB is realised in both law and lived experience.

#### **4.0 MARRAKESH PHASE I IN KENYA: ACHIEVEMENTS, INSIGHTS, AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCALISATION**

The first phase of the Marrakesh Declaration established foundational principles for protecting religious minorities and promoting ethical religious leadership rooted in justice, dignity, and compassion. During this inaugural phase, Kenya’s engagement was significantly shaped through JISRA partners who participated in regional and international Marrakesh consultations. Through these platforms, Kenya contributed its lived realities, marked by hybrid religious demographics, historical marginalisation of the coastal and northern regions,

inequities in identity documentation, tensions in the education system, and persistent challenges in family law. These Kenyan experiences were reflected in global discussions and informed the roadmap's emphasis on inclusive citizenship, positive theological narratives, and locally grounded mechanisms to reduce interfaith tensions.

Under JISRA, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers played a key role in introducing and implementing Marrakesh Phase I principles within Kenya. The initiative brought together national, regional, and global actors, fostering connections between Kenyan religious leaders, government agencies, civil society, and international policy institutions. Capacity-building training on Islam and FoRB was vital for enhancing theological literacy among clerics, madrassa teachers, pastors, youth facilitators, and women leaders. These sessions addressed concerns raised during consultations about widespread religious illiteracy, misinterpretation of scripture, and the ease with which harmful narratives are used to justify profiling, securitisation, and mistrust between communities. By equipping religious actors with a firm doctrinal foundation, JISRA bolstered their capacity to respond constructively to sensitive issues related to identity, belonging, extremism, and minority rights.

Marrakesh regional consultations facilitated by NRTP brought together FoRB practitioners in the Community of Practice to reflect on shared challenges, including securitisation, profiling, negative media framing, historical injustices, and competition over resources, all of which are identified as drivers of religious tension in Kenya and neighbouring contexts. These exchanges allowed religious leaders and peace practitioners to contextualise Marrakesh principles for their own environments while comparing strategies for addressing inherited grievances, discriminatory state practices, and politicised religious narratives. JISRA's Community of Practice extended this learning by documenting approaches, supporting peer mentorship, and enabling continuous dialogue around FoRB-centred peacebuilding.

A critical output during the Marrakesh Phase I was the development of the Islam and FoRB Resource Guide. The guide distilled Islamic teachings that affirm dignity, justice, compassion, and the protection of religious minorities. It provided an accessible tool for madrassa teachers, imams, and interfaith practitioners seeking to counter misinterpretation and reduce communities' vulnerability to distorted theological messages. Its value was reinforced by consultation insights that emphasised the need for positive faith-based narratives, reference materials, and literacy tools for faith leaders, educators, media actors, and youth.

NRTP further facilitated FoRB advocacy engagements at the African Union and United Nations, ensuring that Kenyan perspectives on identity vetting, resource competition, regional

marginalisation, and securitisation were communicated within global policy forums. These efforts elevated Kenya's role in shaping international norms related to FoRB and demonstrated the country's readiness to serve as a regional learning hub for inclusive citizenship initiatives.

Learnings from Marrakesh Phase I underscored the critical importance of FoRB as a foundation for peace, justice, and national cohesion in Kenya. Consultations highlighted that when FoRB is violated through discriminatory documentation practices, securitisation, harmful narratives, exclusion of minority faiths, or gendered marginalisation in religious leadership, the result is diminished trust in state institutions, heightened intercommunal suspicion, and weakened social cohesion. Stakeholders emphasised that FoRB is inseparable from dignity, equality, and participation, noting that religious discrimination often intersects with ethnic, regional, and socioeconomic inequalities. These insights shaped a set of forward-looking priorities that include curriculum integration, civic education, theological literacy, digital platforms for grassroots learning, gender inclusion, harmonisation of legal processes between the Kadhi and civil courts, and institutional anchoring of FoRB within interfaith councils and government structures.

The achievements of Marrakesh Phase I in Kenya are significant. The country contributed meaningfully to global FoRB discourse, strengthened theological and mediation capacity among religious actors, generated accessible Islamic FoRB resources, facilitated regional peer learning, and positioned its interfaith networks within continental and international advocacy spaces. Through JISRA and NRTP, Kenya now enters Marrakesh Phase II with strengthened institutional relationships, enhanced community-level structures, improved literacy on FoRB, and an emerging body of practice that demonstrates how global principles can be translated into local peacebuilding solutions.

## **5.0 KENYA'S FORB INFRASTRUCTURE AND ITS STRATEGIC POSITIONING FOR MARRAKESH PHASE II**

Kenya possesses a mature and evolving FoRB infrastructure that has developed over decades of interfaith collaboration and was significantly strengthened under the JISRA project. Organisations such as Chemchemi Ya Ukweli, the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics, the Inter Religious Council of Kenya, the Kenya Community Support Centre, the Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance, Muslims for Human Rights, and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims collectively form a strong ecosystem that anchors FoRB engagement at national and county levels. These actors have long facilitated interreligious dialogue, peacebuilding, human rights advocacy,

youth empowerment, women's leadership, and community mediation in regions affected by historical marginalisation, securitisation, and identity-based tension.

Through JISRA, these institutions expanded their technical capacity and deepened theological literacy across diverse religious communities. They countered harmful narratives, strengthened clerics' and lay leaders' ability to interpret doctrine responsibly, and created safe, trusted spaces for interfaith collaboration. This work responded to challenges repeatedly raised in national and county consultations, including the effects of profiling, the persistence of misinformation, the need for media and academia to be literate, and the structural inequalities that continue to affect the Coast and Northeastern regions. JISRA's contributions also included establishing interfaith working groups and mediation platforms in counties with a history of resource competition and religious tension, ensuring that FoRB protections were grounded in local realities and accessible at the grassroots level.

The FoRB project, which concludes in December 2025, further reinforced this framework. Its focus on marginalised religious communities in Tana River, Garissa, Lamu, and surrounding areas reflects the concerns documented about discriminatory identity checks, limited civic awareness, unequal resource allocation, and the need for enhanced collaboration among civil society, government agencies, justice actors, and security forces. The project's intentional engagement of women, youth, religious leaders, county officials, administrators, media practitioners, and national human rights institutions established a layered and inclusive approach to FoRB protection. This strategy aligns with consultation feedback that emphasised the importance of representing minority faiths, the barriers faced by women mediators, youth vulnerability to misinformation, and the need for coordinated action across state and non-state actors.

This robust interfaith ecosystem now forms the backbone of Marrakesh Phase Two localisation in Kenya. Interfaith engagement is an essential expression of FoRB in the Kenyan context because religious identity is deeply connected to belonging, political participation, and access to rights. Interfaith platforms, therefore, function as the spaces where FoRB is negotiated, practised, and safeguarded. Their legitimacy, local trust, and long-standing presence make them well-suited to anchor Marrakesh principles of dignity, justice, and inclusive citizenship.

Kenya's religious landscape and broader socio-political context further position the country as a strategic pilot for Marrakesh Phase Two. Nationally, Kenya is a Christian majority, yet the Coast and Northeastern regions are predominantly Muslim and contain Christian minority communities whose experiences reflect many of the concerns addressed during the

Marrakesh consultations. Kenya also hosts large refugee populations in Dadaab and Kakuma, where Muslim communities form the majority, adding another layer of religious complexity to the national landscape. These overlapping demographic realities create a context in which religious identity intersects with questions of citizenship, documentation, access to public services, political belonging, and historical injustice.

The challenges identified by stakeholders during consultations mirror the global concerns that Marrakesh seeks to address. These include discriminatory identity vetting, tensions between civil and Islamic law, securitisation and profiling of Muslim communities, misrepresentation of minority faiths, curriculum inconsistencies, and harmful narratives that portray Kenya as exclusively Christian or that equate Islam with extremism. At the same time, Kenya benefits from an exceptional enabling environment for FoRB advancement, including constitutional guarantees, active interfaith councils, vibrant civil society, youth and women leaders engaged in peacebuilding, and county structures prepared to integrate inclusive religious approaches into development and security frameworks.

Taken together, these assets position Kenya not only as a strategic pilot for Marrakesh Phase Two but also as a potential continental example of how global principles can be harmonised with local realities to promote durable social cohesion. Its strong FoRB architecture, informed by years of interfaith collaboration and strengthened through JISRA and current FoRB initiatives, provides a foundation capable of advancing the Marrakesh principles in a community-anchored, context-specific, and nationally transformative manner.

## **6.0 HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY DRIVERS OF INTERFAITH TENSION**

A long history of uneven governance, regional marginalisation, and political manipulation of identity shapes Kenya's FoRB landscape. Colonial administrative arrangements, including the ten-mile coastal strip and land decisions following the Lancaster Conference, entrenched unequal citizenship, documentation barriers, and limited access to services in the Coast and North-Eastern regions. Historical injustices such as the Wagalla massacre and the suppression of Islamic political organising deepened mistrust between Muslim communities and state institutions. Contemporary political dynamics continue to exploit ethnic and religious identity for mobilisation, enabling narratives of belonging and exclusion that influence access to resources and public services. Competition over land, water, and pasture can easily take on religious meanings when leaders frame grievances in terms of

identity. These tensions are aggravated by rapid digital misinformation that shapes perceptions among youth and amplifies suspicion between religious groups, creating an environment where historical grievances and contemporary political interests converge to undermine interfaith cohesion.

### **6.1 Harmful Narratives, Misperceptions, and Social Polarisation**

Consultations highlighted that narratives remain one of the most powerful drivers of FoRB violations and interreligious mistrust in Kenya. The widespread perception that Kenya is a Christian nation implicitly delegitimises the equal status of Muslims, Hindus, African traditional practitioners, and other minority groups, despite constitutional guarantees of equality. Stereotypes portraying Muslims as associated with extremism reinforce profiling and securitisation, while misunderstandings about Hindu and African traditional religious practices marginalise these communities socially and culturally. Discussions also revealed confusion linking LGBTQIA identities to stereotypes and misinformation rather than a rights-based understanding. Digital platforms accelerate the spread of such narratives, with unregulated content circulating widely and deepening polarisation, particularly among youth. The cumulative effects of these misperceptions weaken social cohesion and impede the realisation of FoRB in both public discourse and community relations.

### **6.2 Theological Legitimacy, Ethical Leadership, and Scriptural Foundations**

The consultations highlighted that theology plays a vital role in shaping public attitudes, identity formation, and perceptions of justice. Kenya's major religious traditions promote values of dignity, compassion, and care for the vulnerable, providing a solid moral foundation for interfaith understanding. However, limited theological literacy within communities has allowed distorted interpretations of scripture to justify exclusion, portray other faiths negatively, or support extremist ideologies. Participants emphasised that extremist manipulation flourishes where doctrinal understanding is weak, creating a demand for systematic theological engagement. Strengthening theological legitimacy involves equipping religious leaders with accurate scriptural knowledge and opportunities for comparative reflection. Participants observed that Islamic jurisprudence, including principles highlighted in the Marrakesh Declaration such as the Charter of Medina, and Christian teachings, including those referenced in *Nostra Aetate*, offer shared ethical frameworks that affirm equality and safeguard minority rights. Structured platforms for interreligious study and dialogue can

therefore enhance ethical leadership and enable faith leaders to challenge harmful interpretations in ways that resonate with their communities.

### **6.3 Legal, Policy, and Institutional Gaps Impacting FoRB**

Although the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and equality, its implementation remains inconsistent. Many Muslim communities in the Coast and Northeastern regions continue to face obstacles in obtaining identity documents due to historical administrative practices and security-based vetting procedures. The lack of documentation limits access to education, financial services, mobility, and political participation, creating a lived experience of second-class citizenship. Tensions between civil and Kadhi court jurisdictions further generate uncertainty for interfaith families, especially in matters involving inheritance, burial, custody, and divorce, which often place widows and children at risk of coercion. Consultations also identified gaps in education policy, notably regarding religious attire, worship arrangements, and value-based curricula, resulting in inconsistent practices across schools. Institutions tasked with protecting rights, such as KNCHR and NCIC, frequently lack sufficient resources to respond effectively to FoRB violations. Participants stressed the need for a unified reporting and monitoring platform, along with stronger Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning systems to support the nationwide implementation of FoRB.

### **6.4 Securitisation, Profiling, and The FoRB Security Nexus**

Securitisation emerged as one of the most significant challenges affecting Muslim communities in Kenya. In the aftermath of terror attacks such as Westgate, the Garissa University attack, and recurrent border incidents, security operations have included mass arrests, mosque surveillance, arbitrary detentions, and broad profiling of Muslim communities. These actions have eroded trust and reinforced perceptions of collective punishment. Participants stressed that security approaches which treat religious identity as a risk category undermine constitutional rights and weaken community resilience by discouraging cooperation with authorities. Consultations are called for to develop FoRB-sensitive security practices grounded in dignity, human rights, and partnership with community leaders, women's groups, and youth networks. Security actors require training in constitutional rights, religious diversity, and the consequences of profiling, while early warning systems would be strengthened by inclusive collaboration between security institutions and local communities.

### **6.5 Gender, Inclusion, and Women’s Participation in FoRB**

Gender emerged as a central focus of the consultations, with participants emphasising that women are indispensable to community cohesion yet consistently excluded from religious leadership and mediation spaces. Cultural norms and institutional barriers restrict their participation despite their critical roles in caregiving, early detection of community tensions, and reconciliation efforts. Women frequently experience unique FoRB violations, including coercion related to spiritual practices, denial of inheritance, exclusion from worship spaces, and pressure to convert within marriage. Evidence from JISRA showed that when women receive training and institutional support, they become highly effective mediators, community educators, and champions of interfaith understanding. Kenya’s National Action Plan must therefore adopt gender-transformative strategies that elevate women’s leadership, strengthen protections of their rights, and embed their insights into theological dialogue, community mediation, and policy implementation.

### **6.6 Education, Curriculum Development, and Religious Literacy**

The education system is a critical arena where values, identity, and social cohesion are formed, yet recurrent FoRB disputes continue to emerge within schools. Consultations noted that unclear guidelines regarding religious attire, worship practices, and the influence of sponsoring institutions create tension between school administrators and communities. Participants emphasised the need to integrate FoRB principles, value-based education, and ethical reasoning into the national curriculum to support learners’ understanding of diversity. Collaborations with organisations such as Arigatou International were identified as promising pathways for strengthening religious literacy and teacher preparedness. Teachers require training to manage interfaith dialogue, address stereotypes, and promote respect among students. With deliberate reform and capacity building, the education sector can become one of the most powerful drivers of interfaith understanding and inclusive citizenship.

### **6.7 Minority Rights, Family Justice, and Personal Law**

Interfaith families face some of the most complex FoRB challenges because of the intersection of doctrine, culture, and legal systems. Consultations revealed that Christian-Muslim families often feel uncertain about whether civil courts or Kadhi courts should handle issues like inheritance, burial, custody, and marital dissolution. These uncertainties create opportunities for coercion and exploitation, especially for widows and children who may lack legal literacy. Participants stressed the importance of harmonised legal guidance, community

education, and accessible mediation mechanisms that uphold the dignity and rights of all family members. Religious minorities in areas with Christian or Muslim majorities also encounter discrimination, obstacles to accessing worship spaces, and exclusion from local governance, highlighting the need for stronger protections and more inclusive community structures.

### **6.8 Community Resilience, Social Cohesion, and Interfaith Connectors**

Despite the challenges identified, Kenya benefits from strong sources of resilience that have consistently supported coexistence. Community elders, faith leaders, women's associations, youth groups, peace committees, and county-level interfaith platforms regularly intervene to de-escalate tensions and uphold values of mutual respect. Participants shared examples of solidarity, including instances where Muslim communities protected churches and Christian leaders advocated for Muslim rights during crises. These acts of ethical leadership demonstrate that shared values across religions can be powerful connectors. Strengthening community-level structures, investing in trust-building mechanisms, and supporting local actors who model inclusive religious leadership are essential components of a national FoRB strategy.

## **7.0 RATIONALE FOR LOCALISING THE MARRAKESH DECLARATION IN KENYA**

Kenya offers both a supportive environment and a pressing need for the localisation of the Marrakesh Declaration. The constitutional guarantees established interfaith institutions, a decentralised governance system, an active civil society, and a strengthened JISRA-supported FoRB ecosystem, which provide a solid foundation for implementation. At the same time, Kenya faces challenges such as discriminatory documentation, harmful narratives, gender exclusion, securitisation, and interfaith family law dilemmas, which reflect the global concerns that inspired the Marrakesh Treaty. Localising the Declaration provides an opportunity to turn its ethical and theological principles into policies, laws, community practices, and institutional frameworks. Kenya's active participation in Marrakesh Phase One, through theological literacy initiatives, regional consultations, global advocacy, and interfaith learning communities, positions the country well to progress into Phase Two, building on existing trust, infrastructure, and doctrinal engagement.

### **7.1 Strategic Recommendations for Implementing Marrakesh Phase Two in Kenya**

Kenya's advancement into Marrakesh Phase Two requires a coordinated and well-resourced strategy that builds on the country's interfaith strengths while directly addressing the structural, historical, legal, and narrative challenges affecting FoRB. The following recommendations draw from extensive stakeholder consultations and are designed to guide national and county actors in translating Marrakesh principles into meaningful practice.

**A. Strengthen Legal and Policy Foundations for FoRB Realisation**

Kenya should prioritise actions that improve public understanding of FoRB protections, reduce administrative barriers that disproportionately affect marginalised communities, and enhance the legal environment for religious freedom. This includes widespread dissemination of FoRB-related laws in accessible formats, sustained civic education campaigns, multi-stakeholder legal review platforms, and community-based legal aid services that address documentation challenges, inheritance disputes, burial rights, and interfaith family complexities.

**B. Deepen Theological Literacy and Support Ethical Religious Leadership**

Consultations highlighted the need for stronger theological grounding across all major faith traditions. Kenya should expand investments in doctrinal literacy for imams, pastors, priests, madrassa teachers, catechists, and emerging women and youth faith leaders. Structured scripture study forums, peer mentorship networks, and interfaith theological exchanges will strengthen ethical leadership and equip religious actors to respond to harmful interpretations, stereotyping, and extremist manipulation.

**C. Institutionalise FoRB Structures at County and Community Levels**

Counties play a crucial role in localising Marrakesh. Kenya should revitalise and resource County FoRB Dialogue Forums, integrate FoRB into county planning and coordination mechanisms, and strengthen the capacity of chiefs, assistant chiefs, and peace actors to engage in FoRB-sensitive mediation. Expanding interfaith dialogue platforms in villages, urban settlements, refugee contexts, and mixed-faith communities will ensure that FoRB protection is rooted in everyday community life.

**D. Transform Public Awareness and Counter Harmful Narratives**

The spread of misinformation, stereotyping, and negative religious framing requires a national communication strategy that promotes coexistence and corrects harmful assumptions.

Kenya should scale up FoRB awareness campaigns across media platforms, develop curricular and community learning resources, train journalists and digital content creators, and produce culturally resonant counter-narrative content. Interfaith exchange visits, open days, and amplifying women's and youth's voices will help reshape public discourse on citizenship and diversity.

**E. Establish a Comprehensive Monitoring, Reporting, and Learning System**

To ensure accountability and evidence-based implementation, Kenya should create a unified national FoRB reporting and documentation mechanism supported by standardised tools and county-level data flows. Regular assessments, annual status reports, and thematic research on issues such as identity vetting, harmful narratives, and interfaith family law will strengthen transparency and inform responsive policy decisions. Ongoing national learning forums and practitioner exchanges will help consolidate emerging lessons.

**F. Strengthen Multi-Stakeholder Coordination and Partnerships**

Successful implementation of Marrakesh Phase Two requires alignment across government ministries, county governments, interfaith councils, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Kenya should operationalise a coordinated national FoRB platform, institutionalise regular multi-faith and multi-agency meetings, and develop partnerships with private sector actors, including media houses, telecoms, and digital companies. This approach will reduce fragmentation, promote shared ownership, and ensure consistent messaging across the country.

**G. Prioritise Youth, Women, and Marginalised Religious Communities**

Youth and women emerged as central actors in interfaith mediation, narrative change, and digital literacy. Kenya should further strengthen their leadership through targeted training, community engagement opportunities, and platforms that amplify their contributions. Special attention should be given to minority faith communities in both Muslim majority and Christian-majority regions to ensure equitable participation, access to documentation, and protection from discrimination.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

The national consultation confirmed that Kenya is at a crucial stage in its FoRB journey. The country's situation is characterised by considerable religious diversity, complex histories of marginalisation and resilience, and ongoing challenges related to citizenship, security, education, and legal recognition. At the same time, Kenya has built significant strengths: a vibrant interfaith movement, experienced religious and civic leaders, active youth and women's groups, and a developing body of practice created through JISRA, Finn Church Aid, and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. These strengths offer a unique chance to shift from scattered efforts to a strategic, nationally owned plan that connects local realities with global principles.

The Marrakesh Declaration offers an ethical, theological, and legal framework that directly tackles the challenges identified in the consultations. Its focus on equal citizenship, protection of minorities, and covenantal responsibility aligns with constitutional commitments and the best traditions of Kenya's religious communities. Localising Marrakesh, therefore, is not about importing an external model but about drawing on a shared moral language to address deep-rooted inequalities, rectify historical injustices, and transform the relationship between religion, identity, power, resources, and belonging.

The proposed Kenya Marrakesh National Action Plan 2026 to 2036 translates this vision into concrete action. It outlines approaches to improve legal literacy and access to justice, build theological capacity and interfaith cooperation, institutionalise FoRB structures at the county and community levels, reshape public narratives through education and media, and establish effective monitoring, accountability, and learning systems. It also recognises that women and youth are vital partners in this work, and that marginalised religious communities must be central rather than peripheral to FoRB implementation.

If fully implemented, the National Action Plan will help ensure that constitutional guarantees are reflected in daily life, that security practices uphold dignity and foster trust, and that interfaith engagement becomes a consistent expression of mutual protection rather than a sporadic response to crises. Kenya will be positioned not only to defend FoRB within its borders but also to serve as a regional centre for learning and promoting inclusive citizenship.

The task ahead is both ambitious and feasible. It requires sustained political dedication, long-term commitments from donors and partners, and ongoing cooperation among religious councils, civil society, state institutions, and communities. The consultation process has demonstrated appetite, capacity, and vision for this work. The Marrakesh Declaration, adapted

to Kenyan realities and implemented through the National Action Plan, offers a clear path to secure these achievements and forge a future where religious diversity is recognised as a source of strength for a just, peaceful, and cohesive Kenya.