



Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
Programme des Relations Islamo-Chrétiennes en Afrique



"WALKING THE PATH OF PEACE FOR A PEACEFUL SOCIETY"



WEST AFRICA CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS SEMINAR ON COUNTERING RADICALISATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

HELD FROM 26TH - 29TH JUNE 2016
AT THE
PROCMURA MEETING AND CONFERENCE CENTRE
NAIROBI, KENYA

Introduction

The growing menace and challenges posed by radicalisation and violent extremism in some parts of Africa and indeed the world at large, are very disturbing and call for concerted efforts by all people of goodwill across religious, cultural and political divides among others to work together to deal with the situation. In deed no one should be left out or sit arms folded in the joint efforts aimed at countering this phenomenon. The West Africa sub-region is arguably one of the worst (if not the most) hit regions by the heinous activities of some well known violent extremists groups within the continent of Africa. Some of the well known groups in operation in the region with a number of them enlisted as terrorists organisations include: Boko Haram who refer to themselves as 'Jama'at ahlis Sunnah lid-Da'wah wal-Jihad' meaning 'People committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad'. They are known to operate in north-eastern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar al- Din ("Helpers of the (Islamic) religion" or "defenders of the faith"). Both groups operate in the Sahara and Sahel regions of Mali, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire with a stated objective of expanding their activities into neighbouring countries. A breakaway group from AQIM who refer to themselves as Jamā at at-Tawhīd wal-Jihād fī gharb Afriqqiyā, translated as "Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa" (MOJWA) are known to have declared their intention of spreading their activities in West Africa as well. The groups as enlisted except MOJWA which not much have been heard about them, have wrecked havoc on innocent people within the sub-region in the name of establishing Islamic states or introducing Islamic law (Shariah) as the legal code for governance. As a result of this religio-political move, the violent extremists have heavily implicated religion and used it to cause pain and death on all who stand in their way. No one is safe, except those who have embraced their form of political and religious ideology and seek to stick by it.

As result of this concern, we (PROCMURA) resourced specific funds from one of our partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg to bring together the leadership of the churches in Africa (beginning from West Africa) to provide them with information on the philosophy of the radicalised and violent extremists, and what needs to be done alongside the Muslim community to curb the menace



Participation

As a result of the commitment of PROCMURA to build and enhance the capacity of the Christian leaders in their quest to work alongside the Muslim leaders to curb radicalisation and violent extremism, Christian religious leaders numbering thirty (30) of which fourteen (14) were women and sixteen (16) men drawn from nine (9) West African Countries of Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Republic of Benin, Togo,



and the Central African country of Cameroon were brought together for a seminar. The seminar took place at the PROCMURA Meeting and Conference Centre, Nairobi, from 26th -29th June, 2016.

Opening Session



Bishop Samwini (Standing) giving the admonition

The three days intensive seminar began with a devotion conducted by Bishop (Dr.) Nathan Idrissu Samwini of the Methodist Church, Ghana, who is also PROCMURA's former Area Adviser for Ghana and former Regional Coordinator for Anglophone West Africa. After participants enthusiastically sung the adopted PROCMURA anthem "Jesus where can we find you in our world today" the bishop asked for the Gospel of Luke 11: 1-23 to be read in both French and English.

In his short reflection, the bishop highlighted the centrality of prayer in difficult situations and the importance of forgiveness and perseverance in an age where intolerance and violent extremism has hurt so many people. He concluded by reiterating on the content of the Lord's Prayer which he explained that it was comprehensive and can serve as a guide to individual supplication before God.

Welcoming Participants

Following the devotion, the PROCMURA Team Leader, Finance and Administration, Ms. Joy Wandabwa officially and formally welcomed all the participants to the first regional seminar of PROCMURA to be held in its new offices, Meeting and Conference Centre here in Nairobi. She urged participants to feel at home and to draw her attention to anything that they feel PROCMURA could do more to make its meeting and conference centre a homely and welcoming environment to all who will want to use it for their activities.



Ms. Joy Wandabwa welcoming Participants

After the welcome, participants were asked to introduce themselves and spell out their positions in their churches and their relationship with PROCMURA.

Rationale for the Seminar

Following the devotion and welcome, the General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah provided a succinct presentation on the purpose for the seminar. He mentioned in clear terms that West Africa specifically, and the world at large is confronted and alarmed by the increasingly disturbing situation of radicalisation and violent extremism. The question that yearns for an answer in this seminar is what Christian leaders should do in collaboration with Muslim leaders to curb this frightening development that has given religion a bad name and put religious people on the defensive all the time. The seminar, the General Adviser explained, is designed in a manner that it will create the required space for Christian religious leaders of men, women and youth, to carefully engage with themselves in an intra-Christian discussion and raise critical questions on the way forward towards curbing the menace.

Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: What it is and who the actors are

The Rev Dr Johnson Mbillah, having provided the rationale for the seminar gave a global overview on well known violent extremist networks. He outlined each of the groups, their ideological underpinnings, areas of operation and partial dominance, and other critical schemes related to the groups. Some of the violent extremist groups that he mentioned include: Al-Qaeda Network, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Nusra Front, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Ansar -Din, MOJWA, and other splinter groups from the main networks.

It was also made clear that each of the groups have committed and still committing inhuman acts against people who they perceive are opposed to their form of religious ideology. Plenary discussions followed immediately after the presentation. Questions were asked and answers provided satisfactorily



Boko Haram: A National and Regional Menace

A diagnostic presentation on Boko Haram extremist group of Nigeria was made by Rev. Dr. Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel, PROCMURA's Programme Officer. His presentation provided basic etymology and historical background of Boko Haram; leadership chain; organisational structure; presuppose reasons for their existence; radicalisation processes; funding strategies; outline of the group's devastating impact on humanity and environment; initiatives to counter the group's actions, etc.



The presentation further exposed the participants to the spread of the perverted teachings of the group beyond the boundaries of Nigeria. It became a trans-national terrorist jihadist group when it was approved

Deepening Understanding: Case Study Presentations

The sessions that followed focused on different case studies in order to provide broader knowledge on the horrifying incidences of violent extremist groups in different regions

- **Francophone West Africa**



The Rev. Dr. Adraké Komi Dzinyéfa, PROCMURA Area Adviser for Togo and now newly appointed full time PROCMURA Regional Coordinator for Francophone West Africa, made a presentation that gave a general overview on the presence and activities of some notable violent extremist groups within the French-speaking states of West Africa. In his presentation, he provided some detailed information on the activities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, MOJWA and Ansar al-Din

These groups have committed heinous crimes against fellow human beings in the region. Members of the groups have terrorised people in Mali, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire. Many people have been killed, others maimed and others especially women and girls abducted, and used as human shields to the terrorist groups. He informed participants of actions PROCMURA has taken in the region by bringing Christian and Muslim religious leaders of virtually all the francophone countries within West Africa to discuss and plan on what needs to be done to ameliorate the situation.

- **Central African Region**

The Central Africa region is not immune to the disturbing activities of violent extremist groups. Rev. Sally Margaret Effungani a PROCMURA Ph.D student who is also the acting Acting Area Adviser for Cameroon in her case study presentation stated that the region has had its share of horrendous activities of some local and transnational violent extremist and terrorists groups.

The notable groups found in the region include Boko Haram which is active in northern Cameroon and Chad and the very worrying Seleka and Anti-Balaka groups that continue to create mayhem in the Central African Republic. She noted in her presentation that the leadership of the churches in the region need to step up their resolve to work towards countering the violent extremists ideology and added that they will only be able to do so when they carry out extensive and intensive consultation with the Muslim community.



- **Anglophone West Africa**

Rev. Dr. Fola Lateju, Area Adviser for Nigeria West and one time Regional Coordinator for Anglophone West Africa gave an overview of various religious sects and groupings within West Africa whose activities need to be monitored carefully. He explained that even though Boko Haram is the well known group by name there are other groups who have not yet been labelled but whose philosophy and ideological thinking are similar to that of Boko Haram.



In his concluding remarks he explained that it was important to always take teachings of groups seriously even if they did not bear the label Boko Haram. He indicated that when Boko Haram began its activities no one knew that they will grow to become national, regional and indeed a world problem but now they are. Emerging groups have to be watched, he explained.

- **East African Region**

The region is not free from the heinous activities of violent extremist groups. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei would-be General Adviser, who will replace Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah on 1st January 2017, provided a general overview of notable extremists groups within the region. He singled out Al-Shabaab as the group that has for a number of years continued its terror attacks in some countries in the region.

He gave an outline of the group's religious and ideological groundings and the various tragic attacks meted on innocent people as strategy for imposing its form of religious ideology. He concluded by saying that despite the horrible activities of Al-Shabaab, Christians and Muslims of goodwill must seek to be in solidarity with each other over and against divisions the violent extremist group wants to entrench.



Women and youth bearing the brunt of acts of violent extremism in Africa

A presentation on the devastating effects of radicalisation and violent extremism on women and youth in Africa was made by Ms. Florence Imimza, Research and Women Issues in Christian-Muslim relations. In her presentation she gave a rundown of incidences where the lives of women and youth were in jeopardy due to the barbaric activities of some of the notable violent extremist groups operating in Africa. She specifically cited the case of the popular “Chibok Girls” that were abducted and used as sex slaves and human shield by their abductors, Boko Haram.



She said that countless women and girls have been kidnapped, molested and assaulted sexually by the mindless violent extremists, while some young girls have also been used as suicide bombers. She cited the girls that were used as suicide bombers in Garoua, northern Cameroon by Boko Haram. On the youth, she cited Al-Shabaab's attack at the Garisa University (Kenya) and the killing of 146 students. Ms. Iminza concluded her presentation by calling on the religious leaders to do more in protecting women, the girl-child and youth from the brutality and influence of the extremist groups.

The Way Forward

Having been taken through the various presentations and exhaustively discussing the various presentations at plenary, participants went into country focus group discussion in order to carry out a situational analysis of their respective countries and to develop country action plans that would enable them replicate what they had learnt widely and how to collaborate with the Muslim community in the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism.



They also discussed how to embark on resource mobilisation to carry out their programmes. Each country presented an overview of their action plans at the plenary. Refined copies of the action plans were given to the programme unit for purposes of follow-up and assistance in resource mobilisation.

A Resolution to work towards Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

Towards the end of the seminar, a statement of commitment was ratified, adopted and issued by the participants. The statement includes a commitment to be in solidarity with Muslims in an effort to counter radicalisation and violent extremism, and also a strong call on the governments within the sub-region to be more proactive in combating the menace of insecurity caused by violent extremists' networks.



The statement further re-echoed the centrality and importance of intra-Christian engagement as the first step towards a meaningful Christian and Muslim interfaith engagements. A copy of the statement which was sent to all and sundry and also put on the PROCMURA website is hereby attached for ease of reference.

Assessments and Recommendations

As the case with PROCMURA, towards the end of all our programme activities, our designed post-activity assessment forms are given out to each participant to fill. The Same was the case during the activity been reported. The participants filled out the forms and returned to the programme staff for analysis.

The participants in unanimity commended the PROCMURA team for such a timely seminar. The seminar to most of them provided new insights into the worrying challenges posed by radicalisation and violent extremism within the sub-region and the world at large. The Christian religious leaders applauded the planning and implementation of the activity. The sessions were described as interconnected and informative. Almost all the participants using different expressive language called on PROCMURA to organise and facilitate similar seminars for Christian and Muslim religious leaders at individual countries within the sub-region and indeed Africa at large. They requested PROCMURA to harmonise their individual country's action plans which they submitted, into a regional and continental thematic intervention while providing support for country focused action plans.

All the participants expressed commitment toward the implementation of the step-down action plans in the respective countries.

Conclusion

PROCMURA expresses gratitude to our partners especially the Evangelical- Lutheran Church in Württemberg for providing support towards the implementation of the capacity building/enhancement seminar on countering radicalisation and violent extremism for Christian religious leaders from West Africa sub-region. Similarly, we are thankful to the religious leaders for their willing and active participation during the seminar. It is our hope that the knowledge gained will be applied in the region and more especially the countries from which they come.

Prepared by the PROCMURA Team

Attendance List

No.	Name	Church Denomination	Country
1.	Rt. Rev. James AY Odico	Anglican Church	The Gambia
2.	Rev. Flavien I. Tapsoba	The Apostolic Church	Burkina Faso
3.	Ms. Leocardie A. Touh	Evangelical Presbyterian Church	Togo
4.	Rev. Robert Goyek	Brethren Lutheran Church	Cameroon
5.	Rev. Christiana S. Koroma	Congregational Evangelical Church	Sierra Leone
6.	Ms. Annie P. Belle	Methodist Church	The Gambia
7.	Dr. Theresa Adamu	Evangelical Church Winning All	Nigeria
8.	Dr. Florence ML Compaore	The Apostolic Mission Church	Burkina Faso
9.	Past. Jean Noel Faye	The Lutheran Church	Senegal
10.	Ven. Joshua Mallam	Anglican Church	Nigeria
11.	Ms. Angela Bannerman	Charismatic Pentecostal Church	Ghana
13.	Rev. Adama Faye	The Lutheran Church	Senegal
14.	Rev. Bernadette Masaquoi	Huntingdon Church	Sierra Leone
15.	Rev. Joseph Diof	The Lutheran Church	Senegal
16.	Past. Onyami K. Apadou	Evangelical Presbyterian Church	Togo
17.	Rev. St. John York	Methodist Church	Liberia
18.	Mr. Noah Felix Brima	Anglican Church	Sierra Leone
19.	Dr. Benjamin D. Lartey	AME Zion Church	Liberia
20.	Mrs. Rebecca AT Major	Catholic Church	Liberia
21.	Mme. Henriette Henga M	Evangelical Church	Cameroon
22.	Rev. Emmanuel Johnson	AME Zion Church	Liberia
23.	Ven. Dr. Julius S. Adekoya	Anglican Church	Nigeria
24.	Rev. Dr. Fola Lateju	Nigeria Baptist Convention	Nigeria
25.	Rt. Rev. Nathan I Samwini	Methodist Church	Ghana
26.	Rev. Dr. Komi D. Drake	Evangelical Presbyterian Church	Togo
27.	Payong M. Edwige	Pentecostal Church	Cameroon
28.	Constant Lokossou	Methodist Church	Benin
29.	Rev. Salli M. Effungani	Presbyterian Church	Cameroon
30.	Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei	A. E. Presbyterian Church	Kenya
31.	Ms. Florence Iminza	PROCMURA Central Office	Kenya
32.	Rev. Dr Lesmore G Ezekiel	PROCMURA Central Office	Kenya
33.	Ms. Joy Wandabwa	PROCMURA Central Office	Kenya
34.	Rev. Dr Johnson Mbillah	PROCMURA Central Office	Kenya

OUR VISION

A continent where Christian and Muslim communities in spite of their differences, work together for justice, peace and reconciliation, towards the holistic development of the human family and the environment.

OUR MISSION

Faithful Christian witness to the Gospel in an interfaith environment of Christians and Muslims that respects the spirit of good neighbourliness and Christian constructive engagement with Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence.

OUR OVERALL GOAL

To see an African continent where Christians and Muslims uphold the principles of religious freedom and all that it entails and constructively relates to promote peace in the society and peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim communities, and jointly responding to environmental challenges.