



Caritas Africa

Regional Executive Secretariat

VENRO Africa-European Civil Society Hybrid Conference

Summary Report of the

Caritas Africa Digital Workshop on Peace, Security and Fragility.

Theme: Partnerships with Faith Actors in Peace and Resilience Building in sub-Saharan African States.



Date: Friday, 16th October from 13.30-15.30 CEST

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VENRO

ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN DEVELOPMENT
AND HUMANITARIAN AID NGOS



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Cover Photo

His Eminence Dieudonné Cardinal NZAPALAINGA, Archbishop of Bangui, joins Muslims in prayer for an end to the crisis in the Central African Republic. Credit: Sam Phelps for Catholic Relief Services.

Table of contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 2 |
| 2. Agenda | 3 |
| 3. Message from the Regional Coordinator of Caritas Africa | 4 |
| 4. Message from the Secretary General of Caritas Europa | 5 |
| 5. Highlights from the Presentations | 6 |
| 5.1 <i>National Commission of Catholic Justice, Peace and Caritas (Liberia)</i> | 6 |
| 5.2 <i>Caritas Mali</i> | 8 |
| 5.3 <i>Caritas Democratic Republic of Congo Asbl</i> | 8 |
| 5.4 <i>Caritas Central African Republic</i> | 9 |
| 5.5 <i>Caritas South Sudan</i> | 10 |
| 6. Major Lessons and Conclusions from the Workshop and Recommendation | 12 |
| 6.1 <i>The niche of Faith Actors</i> | 12 |
| 6.2 <i>Key roles of Faith Actors and Civil Society in the « New Quality » of the Africa-UE Partnership</i> | 13 |
| 7. Recommendations drawn from the Workshop for a stronger role for Faith and Civil Society Actors | 14 |
| 8. Recommendations drawn from the Workshop for decision-makers to better rely on the role of Faith and Civil Society Actors | 15 |
| 9. Background documents | 20 |

1. Introduction

On Friday 16th October 2020, Caritas Africa facilitated a digital workshop on Peace, Security, and Fragility at the VENRO Hybrid conference on **“Civil Society Driving Change; *Towards a New Quality of the Africa-Europe Partnership.*”**

The workshop took place virtually on ZOOM and reached up to 24 participants, seeking to achieve the following objectives:

- Highlight the need for a deeply rooted understanding of the local context and drivers of conflict at the grassroots level in sub-Saharan Africa, and propose interventions to build back better through multi-stakeholder partnerships during and after COVID-19.
- Demonstrate the need for European Union delegations to further deepen their engagement and partnerships with faith communities most rooted in local communities and connected to the people experiencing poverty and marginalization.

Propose ideas to foster peace and security through a human-rights based approach with contributions from civil society.

2

2. Agenda

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| Opening Prayer: Rev. Fr. McDonald NAH | | |
| | Workshop overview, objectives, and housekeeping rules (2 mins) | Ms. Lucy ESIPILA Policy and Advocacy Officer Caritas Africa. |
| 1.35 pm-1.40 pm | Opening Remarks (5 mins) | Mr. Albert MASHIKA Regional Coordinator Caritas Africa |
| 1.40 pm-1.50 pm | <i>The role of ethnic and religious diversity in perpetuating civil conflict in Mali (10 mins)</i> | Mr. Antoine SAGARA Caritas Mali |
| 1.50 pm- 2.00 pm | <i>The role of the Church in achieving good governance, transparent and accountable institutions, and in promoting access to basic services, economic and social inclusion for most marginalized communities (10 mins)</i> | Rev. Fr. McDonald NAH National Director National Commission of Catholic Justice, Peace and Caritas in Liberia |
| 2.00 pm-2.10 pm | <i>Challenges in translating fiscal gains from resource-rich countries into development outcomes and in building inclusive societies in South Sudan. (10 mins)</i> | Mr. Gabriel YAI National Director Caritas South Sudan |
| 2.10 pm-2.20 pm | <i>The role of faith communities in promoting free fair and inclusive elections. Lessons learned from election observers in DR Congo. (10 mins)</i> | Rev. Fr. Eric ABEDILEMBE Deputy Executive Secretary Caritas Congo ASBL – DRC |
| 2.20 pm-2.30 pm | <i>Learning from Local communities: strengthening a society's resilience through the engagement of local communities in public decision-making forums. (10 mins)</i> | Mr. Regis BESSAFI Emergencies Programme Officer Caritas Central African Republic |
| 2.30 pm-3.10 pm | Plenary Discussions: Suggestions from participants on how Civil Society contributes to the advancement of Africa-Europe partnership in peacebuilding and overcoming fragility in sub-Saharan Africa. (40 mins) | Ms. Lucy ESIPILA Policy and Advocacy Officer Caritas Africa |
| 3.10 pm-3.25 pm | Summary of recommendations from participants' results out of the workshop. (15 mins) | Mr. Kisuke NDIKU Independent Consultant at Precise Communications |
| 3.25 pm-3.30 pm | Closing remarks (5 mins) | Mr. Albert MASHIKA Regional Coordinator Caritas Africa |
| Closing Prayer: Rev. Fr. Eric ABEDILEMBE | | |

3. Message from the Regional Coordinator of Caritas Africa



Caritas Africa is grateful to the VENRO hybrid conference organisers, for giving us the opportunity to host this digital workshop on Peace, Security and Fragility. We appreciate this initiative that seeks to see increased recognition of the role of Civil Society in the future of the AU-EU relations.

As a Regional Secretariat, Caritas Africa represents a network of 46 National Caritas Organisations in sub-Saharan Africa region, including islands in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Each National Caritas works in different humanitarian and development contexts. We therefore have a role to promote cooperation and harmonise the work of our members. Initiatives such as this conference, allow us to learn from each other and use policy recommendations to improve the lives of the local communities that we serve through the structures of the Catholic Church in Africa with regard to the AU 2063 Agenda and the Agenda 2030.

Peace and Resilience Building is a priority thematic area in our 2020-2023 Regional Advocacy Strategy. We hope that the outcomes of this workshop will feed into the discussions leading up to the next African Union and European Union Summit. We are desirous to see that the role of Civil Society, Local Communities and Faith Actors such as ourselves, will inform the nature of partnership in the future of the AU-EU relations

Mr. Albert MASHIKA

Regional Coordinator of Caritas Africa)

4. Message from the Secretary General of Caritas Europa



EU-Africa relations are high on the EU's agenda this year, and they will remain a high priority for the EU in 2021. For us, it is thus crucial that Caritas Africa and Caritas Europa work closely together to try to shape the future EU-Africa partnership, so it is better grounded in the Agenda 2063 and in the transformative principles of the 2030 Agenda. It is also crucial that we gather efforts to raise our messages to larger audiences and to AU and EU decision-makers. In this sense, our participation in the VENRO Conference was a valuable opportunity to, on the one hand, learn from other civil society actors about their innovative ideas to influence the EU-Africa framework, and on the other hand, to share our own experiences and expertise with allies. Counting with the contributions of colleagues from several African countries on their powerful initiatives to foster peace and security at the local level is extremely important because they show how the framework for EU-Africa relations can be enhanced by relying more on bottom-up approaches and on the role of local and faith actors. For Caritas Europa, this is still missing from the proposals made by EU institutions, but we hope that by the 6th AU-EU Summit, EU decision-makers will have incorporated these approaches into their strategy with Africa.

Ms. Maria NYMAN

*Secretary-General
Caritas Europa*

5. Highlights from the Presentations

The Caritas Africa digital workshop at the VENRO Africa-European civil society Hybrid Conference held on Friday, 16th October 2020, focused on experiences from different African countries and on the work done by in-country national Caritas interventions.

The speakers were drawn from NCJPC Liberia, Caritas Central African Republic, Caritas DR Congo, Caritas South Sudan, and Caritas Mali. The choice of speakers was based on their country contexts in relation to peace, security and fragility, and the role of National and Sub-national (Diocesan) Caritas Organisations in the implementation and leadership of the interventions in those countries. The section below presents a summary of each presentation.

5.1 National Commission for Catholic Justice, Peace and Caritas (NCJPC) Liberia

The role of the Church in achieving good governance, transparent and accountable institutions, and in promoting access to basic services, economic and social inclusion for most marginalized communities.

6

“Every economic and political theory or action must set about providing each inhabitant of the planet with the minimum to live in dignity and freedom, with the possibility of supporting a family, educating children, praising God and developing one’s human potential.” (Pope Francis, in his letter to H.E. David Cameron Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 2013).

To achieve good governance, transparent and accountable institutions, faith actors have to remain grounded in the realities of the people they serve, while also engaging governments to foster greater citizen equity and inclusion. This may be achieved through enhancing capacities among staff and target

communities, so they are equipped to advise policymakers, ministers, lawmakers, and key committees on socio-economics, justice, environment, amongst other development needs of the most marginalized communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda recognizes local communities as co-implementers and not just beneficiaries of various interventions. Therefore, faith actors may accompany government initiatives by facilitating forums for citizen engagement in decision-making processes. This is in collaboration with other faith actors through the various inter-religious platforms in their respective countries. They also need to work closely with other civil society actors in lobbying, advocacy, civic activism, and facilitating civic awareness among marginalized and furthest to reach communities in our region.

To be effective, faith actors and civil society need to network and gather relevant evidence derived from their long-term presence and constituency with grassroots communities, for use in the facilitation of their work. This evidence needs to be shared and linked to the sub-national, national, sub regional and regional levels and then at the AU-EU level. The church needs an enhanced understanding and a better appreciation of how governance and Pan Africa structures work. Based on this, it can position itself to better take up opportunities to engage in relevant spaces and forums available e.g. at the interfaith forums at the national, and the AU level. The AU and EU engagement with faith actors and civil society in this direction will provide a firm foundation for continued work that enhances development through a commitment to peacebuilding, good governance, and social inclusion, addressing inequalities in society.

7

5.2 Caritas Mali

The role of ethnic and religious diversity in perpetuating civil conflict in Mali

Mali has a diverse ethnic and religious community social fabric. Despite this diversity, households and communities live in peace at the grassroots level. However, Mali has experienced four armed rebellions since independence, with the deadliest in 2012.

Local feudal tensions with ethnic and religious roots occur, but communities are committed to peace. However, the establishment of Islamists in Algeria and Northern Mali in 2000, and the removal of Khadaffi in Libya (2011) seem to have fueled the tensions with new dimensions. This has also led to enhancing the **ambitions** of feudal rulers, Iyad and Kouffa, who aspire to take control of the regions where they are dominant. This causes frequent conflicts that define Mali today. These tensions and frequent conflicts have led to a situation of injustice, poor governance, fragility and a dysfunctional State.

These aspects notwithstanding, faith-based actors have contributed to the avoidance of many conflicts. In Mali, Muslims, Catholics and Protestants are together involved in efforts to foster peace. Equally at the grassroots level, local communities, such as ethnic associations, notably *Tabitaa Pulaku* (of the *Fulani*) and *Guinea Dogon*, are actively engaged in peace efforts.

8

5.3 Caritas Congo – ASBL Democratic Republic of Congo

The role of faith communities in promoting free fair and inclusive elections (Lessons learnt from election observers in DR Congo)

Since 2003 in DR Congo, the Catholic Church has engaged in the overall political debate in the country. The electoral process, in particular, constitutes both a framework for expressing the freedom of individuals and offers the Church the possibility of participating in

social decisions responsibly. In this process, the role of the Church as a faith actor was that of mobilizing and awareness-raising, sensitizing, and provision of electoral expertise for people to take ownership of the electoral issues. This led to a common program by all religious congregations/ denominations and a memorandum of understanding for a frank and close collaboration in civic and electoral education in 2004.

The Church also provided support to the Central Electoral Office (infrastructure, human resources (electoral agents and observers), and logistical means for improving the smooth running of the electoral process. It organized and facilitated conferences, symposiums, training, for witnesses, mediators of electoral conflicts, political leaders, and candidates and the deployment of more than 40,000 observers, for elections in 2018. It also set up a faith-based collective, '*Observatory of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo*' for the period 2004/2005. This facilitated the engagement and involvement of the christian communities, in the electoral process, right down to the village level.

In this regard, the role of the Church "*contributes to consolidate the foundations of a common destiny for building justice, truth, and peace thus promote the establishment of the rule of law through free, transparent and democratic elections in DR Congo*".

9

5.4 Caritas Central African Republic

Learning from Local communities: strengthening a society's resilience through the engagement of local communities in public decision-making forums.

The Central Africa Republic remains in a crisis context, even if its visibility in the media and in important discussion forums has reduced. The crisis seems to have been prolonged by the presence of different groupings of armed non-state actors some of which comprise foreign mercenaries who plunder the country's

resource and property of the indigenous populations. Even with the presence of the UN forces, 80% of the country is by large controlled by the armed non-state actors. Violence has continued despite the hope raised by the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR) in February 2019. The leadership of religious and community leaders with the leadership of the Church has demonstrated that Faith Actors can work with each other and with community leaders through:

- ◆ **Initiatives to make the voices of local communities and civil society heard.**
- ◆ **Commitment to reconciliation dialogue.**
- ◆ **Involving local communities in public decision-making forums.**
- ◆ **Promotion of community programs built on diversity and social inclusion.**

"The increasing involvement of local communities in public decision-making forums to strengthen the resilience of society in the Central African Republic. Local communities do not just come to meetings and forums just to express themselves; their contributions and voices are an integral part of the decision-making process. Together, they can put more pressure on the administration for changes to be made."

10

5.5 Caritas South Sudan

Role of the Church in responding to challenges of translating fiscal gains from resource-rich countries into development outcomes and in building inclusive societies - Caritas South Sudan.

In South Sudan, the process of exploration and exploitation of oil resources has left out the local communities and local governing structures. The processes used in oil extraction have an impact on local community livelihoods beyond just environmental effects. The local communities do not have access to the

benefits of oil as they continue to lack access to basic services and amenities. The Church has played the role of voicing the concerns and raising the realities faced by local communities in relation to the impact of the oil industry.

A research conducted by CORDAID on the context of South Sudan, presented the following aspects, which are important to consider:

- **Collecting evidence by conducting** an assessment of livelihoods, the status of well-being, access to basic services, economic activities, social and cultural assets, values, norms, rules, and community regulations. It is also important to assess the effect of the distortion caused to relationships that are at risk because of the processes associated with oil production. Based on the outputs of findings from these aspects of evidence gathering, the church will be better placed to undertake the following:
 - **Lobbying and advocacy** toward the local and national government, oil industry actors and players on modifications of the existing legal framework, existing industry guidelines, and principles to protect local communities and facilitate the transfer of benefits to communities.
 - **Citizen engagement** to identify practical ways and develop tools, approaches, and techniques for engagement of key stakeholders, dialogue forums, and platforms for addressing priorities of equitable delivery of benefits from oil wealth to society.
 - **Invest in capacity strengthening** at community structures for local development toward self-reliance and strengthened well-being as a premise for local communities to be agents in peacebuilding, democracy, participation, and transparency in local governance.

The Church has observed that embracing a holistic approach that looks beyond environmental impact assessment, to the lives and livelihoods, access to productive land, and new settlements for communities in oil-rich localities is imperative to offset the associated risks.

6.0 Major Lessons and Conclusions from the Workshop and Recommendations

The presentations provided a synopsis of on-going interventions that have had positive results while at the same time raising some aspects where challenges and constraints have been experienced. The presentations also pointed to opportunities and options where on-going engagement can be scaled up, as it will add value to national, sub-regional and overall, the Sub-Sahara Africa level. The engagement of faith actors and civil society will undoubtedly inform, enrich, and enhance the new quality AU-EU partnership.

Following presentations and plenary discussions, the workshop drew the following conclusions:

6.1 The niche of Faith Actors



12

A youth volunteer trained by Catholic Relief Services prepares to distribute fliers informing voters about the October 2017 national elections in Liberia. (Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS)

The presentations highlighted the specific niche faith actors have at the constituency they operate in, the manner they operate, and also the continuing nature of their engagement with communities, local governing structures, and avenues to engage with would-be new formations that occur at the community level. Across the continent, faith actors have been able for instance to contact and hold dialogue with non-state actors and negotiate peace facilitating cessation of hostilities. Attributes of the niche faith actors have to include this:

- ◆ **Unfettered contact with the constituency at all social echelons in communities;**
- ◆ **Holding the propensity to influence and attract community influencers to raise priority concerns;**
- ◆ **The productive synergy between Faith Actors and Civil at the local level for community action exists;**
- ◆ **Access to and able to facilitate forums/platforms well placed to promote citizen engagement;**
- ◆ **Having legitimacy with communities that holds community faith, and trust for the representation of issues.**

6.2 Key roles of Faith actors and Civil Society in the “NEW Quality” of the Africa-EU Partnership



In this photo provided by the United Nations, Archbishop Marcel Utambi, on screen, president of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo, addresses the Security Council on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Credit: Loei Felipe/The United Nations via AP.

The digital workshop highlighted some key lessons which could productively contribute to the "New Quality" Africa-EU Partnership thus faith actors and civil society. All partners that play a role in the future of the AU-EU partnership, the faith actors and civil society are encouraged to:

- ⇒ *Listen and respect the voices of citizens*
- ⇒ *Engage in defining attributes of quality in partnership*
- ⇒ *Embrace attributes of NEW qualities in partnering*
- ⇒ *Promote partnering that nurtures resilient relations*
- ⇒ *Uphold dignity and human rights of citizens*
- ⇒ *Prioritize the quality of governance at the country level*
- ⇒ *Strengthen capacities for a thriving and resilient Africa*

7.0 Recommendations drawn from the workshop for a stronger role for faith and civil society actors

The workshop discourse concluded that faith actors and civil society need to proactively seek access to spaces and forums where they increasingly co-create an african perspective into the AU-EU partnership by:

- ◇ **Contributing to the crafting in a shared partnership of equals - developing quality attributes.** Identify opportunities to obtain representation at the AU-level to participate and contribute with grassroots evidence.
- ◇ **Co-creating instruments and mechanisms for relations that bring faith and civil society actors together to engage in joint efforts.** Utilize interfaith, intra-faith, and similar forums to bring in synergy and enrichment in relational co-creation.
- ◇ **Drawing from the AU Policy and strategy framework for action to maximize spaces provided for in Agenda 2063.** Organize and facilitate in-country engagement at national and sub-regional governance level to review and better understand the content and its application to maximize the execution of Agenda 2063 at the community level.
- ◇ **Drawing from the AU-EU Partnership Framework.** Identify and obtain representation at AU-EU Partnership forums for sharing, learning, and

exchanging grassroots evidence on implications and impacts of the AU-EU Partnership.

- ◇ **Beyond Good Intentions –New EU Africa Partnership.** Organize and facilitate technical forums to better understand frameworks and other instruments of the partnership for quality execution.
- ◇ **Understanding the viable linkages of AU 2063 and the relevance of the EU Strategy for sub-Saharan Africa.** Organize and facilitate technical forums to better understand AU 2063 its linkages to the EU Strategy for sub-Saharan Africa to national execution frameworks for quality monitoring and tracking of progress towards the *Africa We Want- Agenda 2063*.

8.0 Recommendations drawn from the workshop for decision-makers to better rely on the role of faith and civil society actors



Martin Waru is one of the South Sudan refugees living in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement in Uganda. Following decades of civil war, approximately 12 million people fled their homes. He attended the Caritas farmers' field school where he learnt Agricultural technology (Photo Credit; Caritas Internationalis).

A key premise for partnership, besides trust between partners, is legitimacy. A partnership of equals articulates legitimacy and gives room for each to articulate their part in the partnering processes. Legitimacy promotes co-sharing and co-creation. Faith actors and civil society have a key role to represent grassroots legitimacy and *African Voices for Partnership* from the grassroots.

We, therefore, recommend that the “New Quality” Africa EU Partnering processes include Faith Actors and Civil society as partners by:

- ◆ **Acknowledging how faith actors and civil society contribute to the advancement of Africa-Europe partnership and their important role in bringing local evidence-based approaches and solutions, aligned with the Africa We Want - Agenda 2063;**
- ◆ **Including and enhancing international engagement of AU-EU faith actors and civil society linkages with local voices;**
- ◆ **Enhancing an articulated human rights-based approach and social inclusion principles in the partnership;**
- ◆ **Enhancing use of local evidence-based learning and local models for development;**
- ◆ **Building on community peace pillars, local structures, and credible local actors as platforms and forums for building resilient peace.**

9.0 Background documents

- * **Joint Caritas Africa and Caritas Europa statement on Shaping Peace Together with EU-Africa Partnership**

English: <https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/200921-Int-Peace-Day-stmt-ENG.pdf>

French: <https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/200921-Int-Peace-Day-stmt-FR.pdf>

- * **Joint statement for the Ministerial Round Table on the Central Sahel region**

English: <https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Position-Paper-Caritas-confederation-on-Central-Sahel-Ministerial-Roundtable-20-October-EN.pdf>

French: <https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Position-de-Caritas-pour-la-Table-Ronde-Ministe%CC%81rielle-Sahel-Central-final-October-2020-Copy.pdf>

- * **Summary of the Joint Position paper on A new EU-Africa strategy that works for people and the planet**

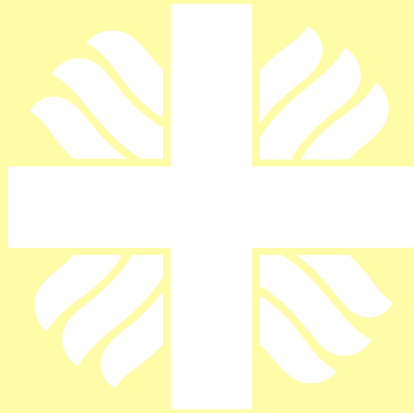
English: <https://www.caritas.eu/a-new-eu-africa-strategy-that-works-for-people-and-the-planet/>

French: <https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9-Caritas-document-de-positionnement-strat%C3%A9gie-UE-Afrique.pdf>

Full Position Paper on A new EU-Africa strategy that works for people and the planet

English: https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200515_CE-Position-Paper-on-New-Africa-Strategy_FINAL_corrected.pdf

French: <https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Caritas-document-de-positionnement-strategie-UE-Africa.pdf>



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