

# WOMEN OF FAITH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE AND RECONCILIATION





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted to map women of faith engagements in peace and reconciliation. The objectives of the study are to: identify structures of women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation processes; and Document lessons and provide key recommendations—pointing out strategies to enhance the participation and influence of women of faith in peace and reconciliation processes.

The study used a qualitative method to generate and analyze the necessary data and draw findings, as well as both primary and secondary data. The primary data were generated through key informant interviews and focus group discussions, whereas the secondary data were generated through literature review and analysis of relevant documents. The primary data were predominantly generated from the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) and its member institutions. Participants of the study were selected through a purposive sampling method. In general, the study conducted 11 key informant interviews and 3 focus group discussions that involved key respondents from the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) and its seven-member institutions; namely the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, the Ethiopian Catholic Church, the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Kalehiwot Church, the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The study adopted a systematic and structured approach for data generation, an explanatory approach to data analysis, context-based interpretation of the data, and consideration of the subjective meanings that respondents brought to the study.

## **The key findings of the study revealed that:**

Faith-based institutions recognize the importance of engaging women of faith in peace and reconciliation. However, the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation activities vary depending on the internal norms and standards of each institution;

The religious institutions, which were involved in this study, have their internal structure

through which women of faith engage in peace and reconciliation. Some have an independent peace department and some have a women and children affairs department, through which women of faith participate in peace and reconciliation endeavors. Those which have no independent peace department in their organogram mainstreamed peace and reconciliation issues in their religious services;

There is no national policy or strategy that addresses the role of women in general, and women of faith in particular in peace and reconciliation;

Even though systems and institutions are put in place to ensure the engagement of women in peace and reconciliation affairs, there are still social, cultural, economic, and institutional challenges against the effective interpretation of existing systems and institutions into effect. As a result, women of faith have not been engaged in peace and reconciliation to the expected level;

The IRCE established a Peacebuilding Department; a Women, Youth, and Children Department; Regional Inter-Religious Councils; and Women and Youth platforms to carry out peace and reconciliation activities in an organized manner. With the leadership of IRCE, efforts have been made so far to bring together women of faith from different member institutions and engage them in sustainable peace and reconciliation activities. However, financial constraint and the shift of attention to traditional harmful practices and Covid-19 has affected the institution from putting its plan into action;

Women of faith in the different religious institutions engage in peace and reconciliation activities, but their level of engagement varies from one institution to the other institution.

There is no theological taught that prohibits women of faith to engage on peace and reconciliation activities. All respondents believe that women have a greater role in peace and reconciliation endeavors; however, there are still social, cultural, institutional, and individual factors that hinder women of faith from contributing their part in peace and reconciliation. To address these challenges, the religious institutions should be supported both technically and financially to carry out more practical women of faith empowerment interventions.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)** is an international non-profit organization mandated to work with people around the world to eradicate poverty and injustice. Currently, the organization is implementing its peacebuilding program, funded by the Swedish Embassy in Ethiopia, through the ACT Church of Sweden and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is under implementation in partnership with key faith-based organizations. This study is the result of a consultancy work conducted by the Frieden Consultancy.

## 1.1 Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the study is to map and document the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation processes, including existing structures, and platforms that women are a part of or that are exclusively used by women both at local and national levels.

### **The Specific Objectives of the study are:**

**Specific Objective 1:** Map the Engagement of Women of Faith in Peace and Reconciliation processes

Map women of faith peacebuilders (who actively engage and influence the peacebuilding process) with the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) and its member religious organizations;

Document their major roles, functions, achievements, and their constituencies at local and national levels;

Document the views of religious actors on the role of faith women in peace and reconciliation and the trust they have as peacebuilders; Identify and document the interlinkages among women of faith peacebuilders and with other similar initiatives by women.

**Specific Objective 2:** Identify structures of women of faith engagements in peace and

reconciliation processes Identify and document structures of women peacebuilders from national to local levels;

Document existing platforms/networks and coordination mechanisms women peacebuilders are part of or led by women at local, national, and regional (Africa Region) and their role, functions, and achievements;

Identify and document organizations supporting women in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

Specific Objective 3: Document lessons and provide key recommendations pointing out strategies to enhance women of faith participation and influence in peace and reconciliation processes;

Document what is working well in the participation of women of faith in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes; Identify key challenges affecting women of faith's engagement in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes; Provide key recommendations and critical areas that guide the peace-building program to enhance the participation of women in peace and reconciliation processes.

## 2. METHOD OF THE STUDY

To explore the systems, structures, practices, and experiences of women of faith's engagement in peace and reconciliation processes, this study used a qualitative research design that adopted a systematic and structured approach to data generation, an explanatory approach to data analysis, contexts-based interpretation of the data, and consideration of the subjective meanings that respondents brought to the study. To meet the desired objectives of the work, the study used both primary and secondary data. As women of faith are the focus of this study, participants of the study were selected predominantly, but not entirely, from faith-based institutions such as IRCE and its member institutions. The primary data were generated from the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) and its member institutions. In addition, efforts were also made to include the views of relevant government institutions such as the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children; and the Ministry of Peace. However, it was hardly possible to get representatives from the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs. Thus, only representatives from the Ministry of Peace was engaged through a key informant interview.

The participants of the study were selected through a purposive sampling method. The necessary data for the study were also generated from the respondents through in-depth one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions; whereas the secondary data were generated through a review of related literature and analysis of documents collected from NCA and IRCE. The key informant interview was used to engage the Secretary-General of IRCE and the Women and Children Department/Peace Department Heads of each member institution, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Peace. On the other hand, focus group discussions were used to engage staff and experts from peace, justice, and development departments, as well as women and children departments of IRCE and its member institutions. For further information regarding respondents' profiles, please refer to Annex 1.

In general, the study conducted 11 key informant interviews and three focus group discussions to generate the required data. Two challenges were encountered in conducting

as many FGD as it was planned. The first challenge was that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which made it difficult to bring together many respondents as a Covid-19 safety protocol, workers in the selected institutions go to their workplaces on different days and times. Second, most of the departments of the religious institutions only had one active staff in the department and, in this case, a single staff was engaged through key informant interviews.

The data which were generated through literature review, document analysis, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions were collated and analyzed systematically. To map the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation, first international and regional, as well as national experiences were meticulously reviewed from relevant literature, and important concepts and best practices were systematically synthesized to create a conceptual framework for the study. Existing systems, mechanisms, and platforms as well as efforts that were made to engage women of faith in peace and reconciliation were explored from existing documents collected from NCA and IRCE. Based on the insights obtained from the literature review and document analysis, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were made with the identified respondents to reveal the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation processes. The lessons and challenges of women of faith to engage in peace and reconciliation processes were also documented. Based on the identified primary and secondary data, insights were drawn and key recommendations were made to enhance that participation and influence of women of faith in peace and reconciliation processes.

In addition to the key informant interviews and the focus group discussions conducted during the data collection, a half-day validation workshop was also organized for key representatives from the Norwegian Church Aid, IRCE, and the member institutions. The major objective of the workshop was to enrich the study and validate its key findings. Furthermore, the workshop participants were also given reasonably sufficient time to express their views and perspectives, as well as their concerns regarding the way ideas, were presented and discussed. Based on the comments and the key recommendations made during the validation workshop, data weeding, the necessary modifications, and refinement were made; and this final version of the study was produced.

## 3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 3.1 Peace and reconciliation

Peace and reconciliation are broader terms and their interpretation varies depending on the context in which they are used. Peace has many dimensions and understandings of it vary over time and across cultures. In the broadest sense, peacebuilding is an umbrella term that embraces security considerations, social and economic concerns, governance and democratization processes as well as the restoration of political order, and the rule of law. Lederach (1997) described peacebuilding as all efforts employed to transform the underlying structural, cultural, and relational roots of violent conflict. Reconciliation could be one of the means used to address the causes. Therefore, peacebuilding is a comprehensive, continuing process that is bottom-up but also addresses society at all levels, from the grassroots to the middle-level actors and at the national and international levels.<sup>1</sup> Peacebuilding is transformative of unequal relations towards more collaborative and egalitarian gender relations. Moreover, peacebuilding is a socio-political process through which women of faith tenaciously position themselves to find voice, legitimacy, and agency to deploy religious resources for peace. It is also about women's agency and voice regarding their ways of knowing, valuing, meaning-making and participation<sup>2</sup>.

There is a growing consensus that the inner dimensions, sources of peaceful values, and practices should not be ignored. In cultivating inner peace, people from diverse faiths and cultures are better prepared spiritually, ethically, emotionally to work for outer or societal peace. There is also a basic assumption that core values and principles of diverse cultures and faiths provide guidance and inspiration for developing a culture of inner peace. As reflected in the holy texts, doctrines, moral wisdom, and body of practices across many faiths, it is through constant cultivation and renewal of such roots of inner peace that

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<sup>1</sup> Lederach, J.P. (2012). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington D.C., US Institute of Peace Press, 1997, as referred to in M. Darweish and C. Rank (Eds.), *Peacebuilding and reconciliation: Contemporary themes and challenges.* London, Pluto Press, 2012, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Christine, O. J. (2014). *Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the Conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya.* University of Bradford E-Thesis, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10454/7289> (Accessed on May 27, 2020)

individuals can grow spiritually. Inner peace, which is cultivated by religious thoughts and values, embraces values, beliefs, and practices that promote spiritual growth, wisdom, and the development of the inner being to think and live nonviolently and peacefully with oneself and all other beings. Inner peace paves the way to truth and reconciliation. Peace is a property of relations that can be built through positive and harmonious interactions while reconciliation is concerned with long-term relationships. Reconciliation is the end of a process that forgiveness begins. Reconciliation can be seen both as resolving particular ruptures in relationships that need repair and as a process of building a society's capacity to reconstruct relationships in an ongoing way (Merwe 2003, cited in Park and Oxon, 2009)<sup>3</sup>. Ideally, reconciliation brings together different themes such as the importance of inclusivity and open dialogue, the need for fair and just relationships, and the prominence of the recognition of differences.

### **3.2 The Role of Faith-based institutions in peace and reconciliation**

Religion may play a role as a marker of identity, a mobilizing device, a basis for rationalizing violent behavior, or a source of values on which to base peace-building and reconciliation<sup>4</sup>. Similar to ethnicity, religion is given much of the blame in contemporary social conflicts. Due to its sensitivity, religion can easily serve as a key cause of conflict<sup>5</sup>. In an extreme case like in religious radicalization, religion can be manipulated by the leaders to mobilize their groups against others out of their religious denominators, promote intolerance of other religions due to their differences in religious values and practices, and have a tremendous influence on youth and their attitudes about other faiths, which easily stirs up emotions and incites violence<sup>6</sup>. In contexts like this, religion is used as a mobilization strategy to dominate others through fear and threats.

In most cases, however, religion by its very nature does not instigate violence. It is believed to be a positive force for social action and peacebuilding<sup>7</sup>. Religion can play a tremendous

3 Park, M. and Oxon, A. (2009) *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*. New York: Routledge

4 Silvestri, S. and Mayall, J. (2015). *The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding*. London: The British Academy.

5 Huntington, S.P. (1997). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

6 Hertog, K. (2010). *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding: Conceptual Contributions and Critical Analysis*. United Kingdom: Lexington Books.

7 Appleby, S. (2000). *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*. Oxford: Eowman and Littlefield.

role in peace and reconciliation, helps in mobilizing for peace and unity, and provide hope to people. It usually promotes peace, humanity, congregation for praising the creator; it strives for commonalities, uniting people, truth and forgiveness; and recognizing that all humans are created equal.

Given the importance of religion in promoting the culture of peace and reconciliation, religious institutions and faith-based groups in the institutions can play a pivotal role in changing the dynamics of social conflicts and often inhibit violence, ensure peace, and make genuine reconciliation. Faith-based institutions have the opportunity as well as legitimacy to promote peace and reconciliation to their congregations and, through their followers, can have a wider impact on the wider community. For example, Lederach<sup>8</sup> in his analysis of the reconstruction of conflict-affected societies puts religious leadership at the apex and middle-range of his pyramid of actors and approaches in peacebuilding. As a powerful constituent of cultural norms and values, religion deeply implicates individual and social conceptions of peace partly because religion addresses some of the most profound existential issues of human life such as freedom/inevitability, fear/security, right/wrong, and sacred/profane<sup>9</sup>. These issues are widely practiced both in Muslims and Christians religious denominations. Muslims and Christians share several similar concepts such as peace/salam, forgiveness/afu, compassion/rahmah, etc. These concepts serve as a theological basis for the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation, though culture hinders them to put these principles into action.

According to Bouta, Kadafifci-Orellana, and Abu-Nimer<sup>10</sup>, Islam is a religion of peace, and that the application of Islamic principles will bring justice, harmony, order, and thus, peace. Fitrah, for example, is one of the key Islamic principles that entails individual responsibility to uphold peace and it emerges out of the original constitution of human beings (fitrah). This principle recognizes that each individual is furnished with reasons and has the potential to

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8 Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.

9 Said, A. and Funk, N. (2001). *Peace in the Sufi Tradition: An ecology of the spirit*, in Said, A., Funk, N. and Kadayifci, S.A.(eds.), *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam*. New York: University Press of America.

10 Bouta, T., Kadafifci-Orellana, S.A, and Abu-Nimer, M. (2005). *Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-faith Actors*. Netherlands institute of International Relations, <http://www.clingendael.nl/cru>.

be good and choose to work for the establishment of harmony. Mahanta<sup>11</sup> notes that Sulha which means “reconciliation” in Arabic, is predominantly practiced within Muslim culture. It is a traditional and communal conflict resolution method practiced in many regions of the Middle East and the Arab world not only by Muslims but also by the Druze and Christians in the Levant region. The Sulha tradition, as Mahanta notes, rests on patriarchal norms and strictly employs male performers-both the mediators, as well as disputants, are represented by an all-male cast. However, women play pivotal roles in different stages of the Sulha process in an informal way. Mahanta describes that at the Sulha Committee formation stage, women play a central role in deciding the membership of the Jaha. The Jaha will not be able to begin its operations without the women folk’s tacit consent, though this is expressed through their male family members. Women behind the curtain convince their male relatives to exclude certain members from the Sulha Committee. Women also make a significant contribution to drafting the main Sulha agreement<sup>12</sup>. When the Jaha comes up with a solution, the women can accept or reject clauses in the agreement, although once again conveyed through the menfolk. More importantly, in the post-Sulha reconciliation stage, it is the women who use their social networks to initiate a healing process in the community and between the conflicting parties

In general, faith-based institutions and social groups such as women of faith can play vital roles in ensuring peace by constructively engaging in peace and reconciliation. Therefore, the role of women of faith in peace and reconciliation should be contemplated and situated in unconditional Human Dignity of all persons irrespective of faith, gender, race, or any other. Furthermore, the roles of women of faith in the effort of peace and reconciliation effort have another practical and experiential basis. This increasing realization prompts global efforts in enhancing the role of women of faith in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Thus, women of faith have to be innovative, active and should be supported particularly at community levels to proactively coordinate their efforts for peace and reconciliation to nurture positive relationships among communities<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Mahanta, R. (2019). Women in peace & security: Women of faith in peacebuilding. World Mediation Organization, <https://worldmediation.org/login/>

<sup>12</sup> Pely, D. (2011). Women in Sulha—excluded yet influential: Examining women’s formal and informal role in traditional dispute resolution, within the patriarchal culture of Northern Israel’s Arab community. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 22 (1): 89-104.

<sup>13</sup> <https://ing.org/first-principles-religion-human-dignity-freedom-expression-freedom-religion/> @ 01:17



### **3.3 Existing systems and institutions to ensure the participation of women of faith in peace and reconciliation**

There are different global, regional, national, and local policies, institutions, systems, and platforms put in place to ensure women's participation in peace and reconciliation. The Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) had emerged from the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference and raised global awareness among other things on the role of women in peacebuilding and the key roles the international community, governments institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local groups could play to ensure equal participation of women in all affairs including peacebuilding. Based on this platform, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was formed in 1996 from women's grassroots groups and won two seats at the official peace negotiations table. In May 1999, International Alert and Women Waging Peace launched a global campaign called 'Women Building Peace: from the Village Council to the Negotiating Table' to promote the role of women in peacebuilding and to help build a new vision of development, security, and peace based on inclusivity and equality.

On the other hand, an NGO Working Group on Women and International Peace and Security (NGOWG), comprising the International Alert and Women Waging Peace, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Amnesty International, International Women's Tribune Centre, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Women's Caucus for Gender Justice and the Hague Appeal for Peace, in collaboration with UNIFEM, played a leading role in bringing significant issues to the attention of Security Council members and provided crucial background information, recommendations, and advice during informal bilateral discussions. The statement by NGOWG reiterated the absence of women's voices in peace deals and high-level negotiations. To address this gap, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (2000) during its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000<sup>14</sup>. Since then, the Resolution is used as a global policy framework to ensure women's engagement in peace and reconciliation. The policy affirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding and stressing

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14 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000.

the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making concerning conflict prevention and resolution. As evidence of the value of women's participation in peace support operations, the Windhoek Declaration called The Namibia Plan of Action on 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations' (S/2000/693) was also ratified to ensure that principles of gender equality permeate peacekeeping missions in every aspect of the peace process and ultimately contributes to a situation of political stability.

At the continental level, it is also evident that Africa has made significant progress towards ensuring women's participation and rights at the policy level with the adoption of various legal instruments and policy frameworks; even though implementation is largely lacking. The Liberia Women's Initiative (LWI) which was formed in 1994 is one of the platforms put in place earlier than the establishment of the policy framework at the continental level. The formulation and launch of an AU Gender Peace and Security Program (GPSP); establishment of a permanent Open Session of the Council on Women, Peace, and Security; and the launch of FemWise–Africa. FemWise shows the improvement in Africa's commitment and political will to strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation in the context of African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) by providing a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity building, and networking. The policy frameworks and the platforms aim to ensure that peace processes in Africa are shaped with the contribution of women's leadership and participation<sup>15</sup>. The AU Assembly formalized the establishment of FemWise–Africa in July 2017 (Assembly/ AU/Dec.663(XXIX)) as a subsidiary body of the Panel of the Wise following recommendations by the Panel<sup>16</sup>. The AU's Peace and Security Office in Sierra Leone commissioned a woman Gender Advisor who was based in the Human Rights Unit. To address gender-based violence during conflict, the advisor also was able to set up a Women's Task Force on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Johnston, 2001)<sup>17</sup>.

In general, both at the international or regional level, there is no specific framework or

<sup>15</sup> African Union Conflict prevention and Early Warning Division of the AU Peace and Security Department

<sup>16</sup> African union Handbook 2018

<sup>17</sup> Johnston, N. (2001). *Gender and Peace Support Operations: Opportunities & Challenges to Improve Practice*. London: International Alert.

system that particularly recognizes the role women of faith could play in the peace and reconciliation process. However, the absence of international, regional, and national systems and institutions does not prevent committed women of faith from engaging in peace and reconciliation. Dekha Ali, a renowned Muslim female peace and reconciliation activist, and practitioner in Wajir County-Kenya is one of the pioneers in this area. Dekha played a leading role to end the 1990s intergroup violence in Kenya. Dekha started a peace initiative with women from other clans called the Wajir Women's Association for Peace, which gradually developed into a broader and all-inclusive committee called Wajir Peace and Development Committee. Dekha started her peace work at the marketplace through mediating conflict by first listening to both parties without interruption. Dekha's spiritual identity as a Muslim formed a strong foundation for her peace work. She explored the Qur'an's teaching on understanding the soul in terms of bringing about durable peace<sup>18</sup>.

As is indicated in the previous sections, this study extensively explores the existing international, regional, national, and local systems and institutions such as structures, policies, forums, and platforms that were put in place to ensure the engagement of women in peace and reconciliation. It also examines whether or not the existing systems and platforms recognize the role women of faith could play in peace and reconciliation affairs. In general, the recognition given to the influence and impact of women of faith in the peace and reconciliation process is increasing from time to time. Institutionalizing the participation and engagement of women in international, regional, national, and local peace and security affairs can be registered as a major step forward to ensure gender equality in all socio-political and security arenas.

Even though systems and institutions are put in place to ensure the engagement of women in peace and reconciliation affairs, there are still challenges against their effective implementation. According to Jacqueline five inter-related factors affect women's peacebuilding roles: 1) social construction of gender roles and identities, which ascribes specific roles to women and men and results in unequal valuing and subordinate positioning of women's roles, 2) hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity: referring the theory of hegemonic masculinity, aggression and violence as a persistent social construction

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<sup>18</sup> Ibrahim Dekha and Janice Jenner, "Wajir Community Based Conflict Management", Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, 7 December, 1996.

that structures the power of masculine identity as dominance, and men use violence and subordination or exclude women. 3) rape and gender-based violence: the use of rape as a weapon of war is designed to destroy the social fabric of society 4) gender relations: unequal gender relation, which results in violence and in the exclusion or neglect of the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding, which in turn leads to the division of roles that produce and maintain inequalities between women and men, and 5) gender differences: there has also been a trend of gender differentiation based on biological differences between women and men, which justify stereotypical and discriminatory practices, leading to the subordination and exclusion of women from the public sphere, democratic citizenship and political life. These barriers that institutionalize gender differentiation and inequality, according to Johnson, are not apparent; they are pervasive, self-perpetuating, consistent, and institutionalized through systemic societal structures<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Johnson, A. (2005). *The Gender Knot: Unravelling Our Patriarchal Legacy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to map the role of women of faith in peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia. The collected data for the study was thematized and key findings were discussed based on the major objectives of the study. The following sections describe the key findings of the study.

### 4.1. Structures of women of faith engagement in Peace and Reconciliation Processes

In Ethiopia, different efforts have been made to enhance the engagement of women in public affairs in general and in peace and reconciliation in particular. The establishment of the Ministry of Peace in the country's governance structure and the appointment of a Muslim woman as Peace Minister could be considered indicators for the dawn of a new era for women to engage in peace and reconciliation affairs. However, national peace policies and strategies are yet to come. In 2018/19, a national women's platform for peace was established by the support from the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Women, youth, and Children Affairs. The platform which consists of 21 volunteer mothers from all regional states was established. These women traveled to different regions and to public universities where intergroup clashes were frequently observed, to advise regional actors and university students to refrain from hostility and violent reactions. However, the women's initiative could not continue due to a lack of attention and sustainable support from both government and non-governmental organizations.

The IRCE also established a women of faith department to empower women to fight traditional harmful practices and enhance their engagement in peace and reconciliation affairs. On the other hand, the Catholic and protestant churches created an institutional structure to engage women of faith in peace and reconciliation activities. On top of all, the ongoing activity by the IRCE to collect together the existing theological thoughts from all of its member institutions on the role of women of faith in peace and reconciliation and the plan to produce a working document on the area are some of the promising practices

to ensure the participation of women of faith in peace and reconciliation affairs. However, when it comes to practice, thus far, the participation of women in general and women of faith in particular in peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia has still got a long way to go. This is due to the impending social, cultural, political, educational, and economic factors that hinder the realization of policies and strategies in practical contexts.

Religious institutions in Ethiopia have their institutional internal structures, systems, and norms through which the religious followers' roles and responsibilities are defined. Their engagement in peace and reconciliation also depends on their institutional norms and standards. From this perspective, the IRCE member institutions have their approaches to engage their women of faith in peace and reconciliation. In this regard, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church has a department that is dedicated to development works, as well as women and children affairs. peace and reconciliation activities are mainstreamed in all activities of the church. At a time of crises and public calamities such as war, drought, epidemic diseases, and other social crises, the Church proclaims days of public repentance and fasting and prayer to the Almighty God for the safety and welfare of the nation, lasting peace and stability for citizens, and advocates forgiveness and reconciliation among concerned parties. The church also prays for peace daily. However, the church has no independent Peace Department in its organizational structure; although it has a Peace Focal Person at the Head Office level. This, according to the validation workshop participants, is so because every activity the church performs is believed to be activities of peace and reconciliation. It was also revealed during the validation workshop that women in the Orthodox Church participate in the parish council of the Church (የሰበካ ጉባኤ አባል), which is part of the highest leadership in the Church. This parish council of Church is working for peace and reconciliation where women are participating in this leadership unit. Women of faith also engage in peace and reconciliation through Tsiwa Mahber and Sunday Schools (Senbet Timhirt Bet).

Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council in its structure also has a department for Women and Children Affairs. It was revealed during the validation workshop that the Islamic Supreme Council has now established an independent peacebuilding department; however, the department has no direct linkage with the women's department. Some provision was given to peace and reconciliation issues in the new proclamation. It was

reported during the validation workshop that the structure was approved recently and its operationalization is at its initial state.

The KII conducted with the Ethiopian Catholic Church Peace and Justice Department Head revealed that the peace and justice issues have been mainstreamed from the Vatican up to the family level with the primary objectives of promoting issues related to peace, justice, and human dignity. The peace and justice issues are extended from the Vatican, then to Episcopal Conference, Secretariats, Dioceses, and the Parish and Out-Station, and finally to the family level. The purpose of this structure is to make each believer be an agent of social transformation inspired by Catholic social teachings (refer to the compendium of CST). In the Catholic church, each believer including women is expected to be an ambassador of peace. In this sense, Catholic women are expected to be agents of peace and reconciliation. The theological base for this is that men and women are equally important as the dignity of Jesus. In this process, women of faith play pivotal roles in teaching about peace, praying for peace, and even engage in mediation through the existing cultural frameworks. However, the activities of the Peace and Justice Department sometimes depend on donors' needs, and, as a result, its activities are not sustainable.

The Ethiopian Catholic Church has both a Justice and Peace Department and a Department of Women and Children Affairs. In the Church, the Justice and Peace Department and the Department of Women and Children Affairs are separate units. The Peace and Justice Department is primarily dedicated to addressing conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues, whereas the Department of Women and Children Affairs is dedicated to addressing broader family and gender issues throughout the Church's structure. The two departments work jointly to address justice and peace issues. The structure of the Justice and Peace Department exists in all Catholic Secretariats and Diocese. Peace and reconciliation are considered core pastoral works in Catholic services. In the church's peace and justice works, women of faith engage not only in peace and reconciliation endeavors but also in leadership positions. Interview with the Catholic Justice and Peace Department Head revealed that the Hawassa and Addis Abeba Dioceses' Justice and Peace Departments are led by women. In Adigrat Catholic Diocese, the Deputy Head of Justice and Peace Department is a woman.

Similarly, the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia has also an independent Advocacy and Peacebuilding Department which is led by the Peace and Advocacy Director and answerable to the vice-president of the institution. The department also has Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Division which is engaged in peacebuilding and trauma healing. Currently, the department has been engaged in addressing peace and trauma issues in Bench, Gedeo, West Guji, West Arssi, and West Wollega (Shambu) zones. The FGD respondents noted that the department engages women of faith in its peacebuilding and trauma healing activities. The Fellowship's gender policy requires an equal number of male and female (50%) participation in peace and trauma healing endeavors. On the other hand, the Ethiopian Kalehiwot Church has Women Ministry, Theological Colleges, and Development Commission. However, the Church has no specific peace department. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, on the other hand, has a well-established Peace Commission, and Women's Department. The Church in general is engaged in peacebuilding activities through the Peace Commission that works all over the country. Usually, the Commission engages men in its conflict resolution and reconciliation activities and invites women to engage wherever necessary.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church has Women, Children and Health Department; however, the Department does not directly engage in peace and reconciliation affairs. The church engages in peace and reconciliation affairs, but the activities are carried out by elders through the Department of Social Affairs. In general, the study showed that IRCE and all of its member institutions have peace and reconciliation programs and they engage women in their activities. However, the existing peace structures, the level of women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation, as well as their sustainability of peace and reconciliation endeavors vary from one institution to the other depending on the internal structure and theological reflections of each institution. Both the institutional and financial constraints are reported by many of the respondents as constraining factors to continuously address peace and reconciliation issues in general and engage women of faith in peace and reconciliation programs in particular.

Efforts have been made to bring together existing institutional capacities and address peace and reconciliation issues in an organized way. To this effect, in 2010, seven religious institutions namely the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs



Supreme Council, the Ethiopian Catholic Church, the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Kalehiwot Church, the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Church, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church established the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) in 2010 to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation. IRCE has Peacebuilding Department, Women, Youth and Children Department, Regional Inter-Religious Councils, and Women and Youth platforms. The Peacebuilding Department is responsible for the promotion of peace and reconciliation using the common values of Christians and Muslims. The department is empowering the people with shared values, mobilizing communities against 'religiously justified extremism', promoting the culture of dialogue, peace, and reconciliation from national to the regional levels.

With regional chapters, the Inter-Religious Council is working for values of shared human dignity and responsibility of every stratum of society to play its part to enhance peace and reconciliation. This includes women, children, and youth. This department, under the secretary-general, works in collaboration with the Women, Youth, and Children Department to empower them for peace and reconciliation. On the other hand, the Women, Youth, and Children Department in IRCE is responsible for promoting the role of women, and youth in peace and reconciliation. On the role of women in peace and reconciliation, this department coordinates and organizes similar sections in regional IRCs and also women leaders in all member institutions. Thus, it coordinates the Inter-Religious Women's leader's platform at the national level, where member religious institutions are represented. Its objective is to promote the vision, mission, and values of the inter-religious council through empowering and structuring collaborative platforms at all levels.

The IRCE, which is an umbrella for seven religious institutions in Ethiopia, has created a dedicated department for women for peace through the Department of Women and Children in 2014. The department was created by bringing together one female representative from the seven-member religious institutions. The department also created a Women's Platform in 2020. The platform involves women representatives from the seven religious institutions and professional associations such as Women Lawyers' Association, Media, and women Parliaments. The FGD participants also pointed out that there is also a Women Taskforce that closely works with the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs. But, due to the emergence of Covid-19 in the country, no further

activity could be performed after its establishment. Respondents from IRCE also noted that the IRCE made efforts to cascade the structure of women of faith structure to all regional states except the new Sidama region. The departments in the regions, however, have no dedicated staff addressing peace and reconciliation issues. The primary duty of the staff in the department is not to address peace and reconciliation issues, they rather are engaged in addressing women's and children's issues.

In addition, the IRCE also established a Women of Faith Platform in 2020 by constituting a one-woman representative from Peace Departments of each of the seven-member institutions and women professional associations such as lawyers, media, and parliament. The IRCE also established a Women Taskforce which is different from the platform and closely works with the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs. The focus group discussion and key informant interview results revealed that the IRCE established the platform to enhance the collaborative engagement of women of faith from the member institutions in peace and reconciliation affairs. In general, the KII and FGD participants stated that ensuring women of faith's role in peace and reconciliation is a cross-cutting issue in the IRCE. In addition, IRCE plays a facilitation role to strengthen and enhance coordination among member institutions' peace departments and women of faith to strengthen their networks and platforms. However, the collaboration between the peace departments and women of faith's platforms is found to be weak.

#### **4.2. Engagement of Women of Faith in Peace and Reconciliation processes**

Given that Ethiopia is a 'nation' made up of different ethnic and religious groups, it is often observed to use varied conflict-resolution, peace, and reconciliation mechanisms. Women's engagement in peace and reconciliation has been observed both in cultural and religious-based settings. Among different ethnic groups, women have different culture-based roles in peace and reconciliation. In the Oromo culture, for example, the Oromo women play a vital role in resolving interpersonal and interclan conflicts through their traditional women structure called Hadha Sinke. When two Oromo clans enter into a prolonged civil war, it is the Hadha Sinke who use their powers of intervention to plead for reconciliation. The Oromo people also believe that women have the right and power to bring about reconciliation not only between the rival groups but also between the people

and their God, Waqa. For example, when severe drought strikes the Oromo land, the people often request the women to pray to Waqa and thus bring about peace and reconciliation with Him. Similarly, Siqqo is used amongst the women of the Sidama ethnic group to make peace and reconciliation in their community. The women through their unity group called Yakka influence their traditional leader called Qaritte to ensure peace and reconciliation as well as the honor of the females in the community. In the Wollo areas of the Amhara Regional State, special sticks are cut from the local trees and used as “staffs of peace” by the women. Placing their “peace sticks” on the ground symbolizes the time to speak of peace, not war. Amongst the Ari ethnic group, on the other hand, the women wear a special peace garment known as a Koysha, which they wrap around their waists when dancing in celebration of peace. They also plead for peace by placing their traditional cotton wraps on the ground.

In Ethiopia where more than 99% of the people are believers<sup>20</sup>, religious figures have high respect and acceptance in their communities. These actors have pervasive influence in the community and typically a reputation as an apolitical force for change based on a respected set of religious values, norms, and standards of spirituality. Thus, religious institutions have unique leverage for reconciling conflicting parties, including a thinking framework, systems, and abilities to rehumanize relationships, which in turn serve as foundations for peace and reconciliation<sup>21</sup>. From this perspective, in faith-based institutions too, women play key roles in peace and reconciliation. All of the people who were engaged in this study do not doubt the positive contribution of engaging women of faith in the peace and reconciliation process. The respondents fully agree that if they are given the opportunity, women of faith have the wisdom and capacity to amicably resolve conflicts. The Secretary-General of IRCE has a view that women of faith as mothers, sisters, and wives have the opportunity, capacity, and wisdom to make peace and reconciliation in religious spheres; however, the culture and patriarchal system in the society discourages women from taking assertive leadership roles in peace and reconciliation activities. The KII and FGD results, in general, revealed that there is no theological basis that prohibits women of faith to engage

20 Mapped: The world's most (and least) religious countries, available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/most-religious-countries-in-the-world/>

21 Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace.

in peace and reconciliation. In Catholic religious groups, for example, women of faith are a prototype of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Thus, they are considered as the epicenter of a family, a community, and have been recognized as the main agents of greater peace and reconciliation. The same idea was reflected by the respondents from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church.

From the standpoint of the Orthodox Tewahido faith, women are considered as the prototype of the Holy Mother Virgin Mary. The blessed Virgin Mary is described as the cradle of peace and reconciliation. From this standpoint, the church also goes to the extent of canonizing female saints. Kristos Samra or Christos Samra was an Ethiopian female saint who founded a monastery of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. The Church also has its own women's monastery called nunnery, which is completely run by women. Examples of such monasteries include Sebeta Gethsemane, Entos Eyesus, Asebot, just to mention some. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, a female peace custom called Senbete. In this custom, before the members sit down to eat together, they first ensure that the spirit of peace reigns. Each woman turns to the other woman next to her and asks that she be forgiven for any past wrongdoing. Only when all the women have forgiven each other, the precious food be shared.

In the Muslim religion too, the religion allows women to engage in any peace and reconciliation affairs. What is not allowed, according to the respondents, is to sit with men in mediation and conflict resolution processes. In these processes, it is required to divide women from men by curtain and allow women to contribute their ideas that help resolve conflict and bring peace. In the theological reflection of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, women are recognized as instruments of peace, cultivators of peaceful children, builders of peaceful generation, builders of a nation, and mediators in family disputes with wisdom. Furthermore, the theological reflection also recognizes the role Aster played to save her people from evil to come, the wisdom of Abigail, the commitment of Kristos Samra to drain evil things from their roots. These all show the space the church gives to women in peace and reconciliation.

Respondents who were involved in this study also had a view that disengaging women of faith in leadership positions as well as in peace and reconciliation affairs have

no theological base. The engagement of women of faith in the areas of peace and reconciliation is determined by the respective institutional culture. Accordingly, some IRCE member institutions have started engaging women in top leadership positions. Among the protestant religious institutions, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus went to the extent of ordinating the first female Reverend (Kes) in the church. The church also has produced the first Ethiopian female Ph.D. in theology. As the respondents from the church noted, women make up 52% of the total members. The church also has a bylaw that gives provision that requires to incorporate 35-50% women in all decision-making processes; however, it is not yet materialized. In the Assemblies of God, on the other hand, women can be pastors and can take the high leadership position in the church.

It was also stated, by almost all respondents, that the intermix of religious thoughts with cultural norms has been affecting the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation. Culture and religion are highly interwoven and, in most cases, the cultural norms and standards define religious practices when it comes to practical life. From this perspective, respondents to this study have a view that Ethiopian cultures in most cases discourage females from participating in public affairs, and that the reservation to engage women of faith in peace and reconciliation is inherited from this cultural framework. These in turn have directly affected the confidence of women of faith to engage in peace and reconciliation processes.

The Women, Children, and Health Department Head of the Seventh Day Adventist Church expressed her view that directly involving in peace and reconciliation affairs is not the role of women of faith in the church. The church has Peace and Reconciliation department, but the peace and reconciliation activities in the department are usually performed by men. According to her view, mixing the role of men and women in religious affairs is taking religious institutions far away from the root of religious values. It was her strong view that women have so many religiously consecrated roles that could help them spread the message of peace, so care should be taken not to overrule the roles and responsibilities given to males for the purpose of bringing women to the front.

Respondents from IRCE have a view that the role women of faith have in peace and reconciliation in protestant churches is much bigger. They appeared to be in a better

position both in the existence of systems and institutions as well as in practical terms. Except in the Seventh Day Adventist, women of faith are allowed to hold top leadership roles including being a pastor in protestant churches. The KII interview which was conducted with a female pastor from Ethiopian Religious Council, for example, revealed that even though the effort is at its very initial stage, the council has plans to engage women in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. She is of the view that the history and historiography of a church don't give enough recognition to women. She also expressed her concern that although women played significant roles during the persecution of the church in Ethiopia and a lot of stories have been heard about the contribution of women in peace, the written historical records to support such claims are very scant. Cognizant of that, the Council wants to make a study about it and chronicle the role of women in peace and reconciliation. The pastor has indicated that the church that she ministers to (Assemblies of God) are so conscious about the engagement of women in various conflict resolutions activities within the church. According to this respondent, there are plenty and solid theological bases to empower women on peace and reconciliation. In the Holy Bible, a very wise woman, Abigail, who came to David and had played a big role in making peace indicates women as a symbol of peace. Wisely she was able to advise and bring back King David to his senses. Again, Jesus Christ who is called a prince of peace came from a woman. People might call that an allegory, but this can still show the bigger role women have played in bringing peace to the world, she stated. Again, in the scripture, while Paul was advising Timothy, he advises him and his people to be peaceful. He also talks about how women should advise each other and mentor each other, she emphasized. In her church, there is a system to engage women equally as men based on their merits. There is no partiality and women are equally represented in boards and there is a fair representation of women, she reiterated. She admitted that women are oftentimes found to play both roles as instigators of conflict as well as makers of peace. She emphasizes that cognizant to the double roles women could play, the women in her church have been playing a very big role in reconciliation as they are more ready to listen to both sides of conflicting parties; ready to understand; ready to let it go; and willing and capable to easily mend a broken relationship and help conflicting parties resume new relationships. She attributes the preceding qualities to a natural gift for women and she considers it as God-given.

In general, the study concludes that efforts have been made so far to create platforms and networks that enhance the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation affairs; however, the women in the network and task force have not yet done any concrete peace and reconciliation activities. This was, according to the respondents, partly due to a lack of sustainable technical and financial supports and a shift of attention to combating Covid-19.

### **4.3. Challenges against women of faith's engagement in peace and reconciliation**

The previous section of this study revealed that efforts have been made at various levels to enhance the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation. However, almost all of the respondents to this study had a shared view that the participation of women of faith in peace and reconciliation affairs is not to the expected level. According to the respondents, the long-standing institutional, cultural, societal, and economic factors have hindered women of faith to contribute their part in peace and reconciliation activities. From these perspectives, respondents from IRCE and the member institutions noted that the longstanding patriarchal system in Ethiopia and male dominance in top religious leadership positions has created a wrong perception among the wider community regarding the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation. On the other hand, respondents also had a view that some of the gender roles in religious institutions which were inherited from the culture, appeared to be a challenge for women of faith in engaging in peace and reconciliation. These two factors in turn have made society consider peace and reconciliation as men's role.

On top of these factors, the shortage of funds for peace and reconciliation constrained Peace Departments and Departments of Women, Youth, and Children to mobilize women of faith and organize different peace and reconciliation events. As the respondents noted, lack of sustainable financial support and diversion of attention to other gender-related issues; such as female genital mutilation, education, and recently, efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19 drained the financial resources for peace and reconciliation. IRCE's Women and Children Department also shared the view that shifting attention to gender and humanitarian issues sidelined peace and reconciliation issues. Regarding this, efforts were made to review relevant documents of NCA. The reviewed documents showed that

NCA mobilized resources to address reproductive health, water, sanitation and hygiene, FGM, and other related harmful traditional practices. For example, between 2013-2017, FBOs utilized 2.9 billion Birr for humanitarian emergency response<sup>22</sup>; however, there was no budget allotted for conflict mitigation, peace, and reconciliation during this period mainly because the previous Civil Societies Proclamation did not allow non-governmental organizations to engage in conflict mitigation and peacebuilding endeavors.

The respondents also had a view that women themselves lack the capacity and practical experience necessary in peace and reconciliation. This, according to the respondents, is mainly due to a lack of previous exposure to such endeavors. The religious institutions have made very little or no efforts to change the perception towards women at family level. This in turn is hindering women to come to leadership. In general, the study identified that there is inherent lack of opportunities and resources to engage women in general and women of faith in particular in peace and reconciliation. The capacity and wisdom women have in peace and reconciliation have been recognized; however, in reality this recognition lacks institutional, financial, policy backing. In addition, the respondents have expressed their view that, the small peace and reconciliation efforts in the religious organizations lack intentionality and focus towards women.

In this study, it was realized that the influence of culture in religious practices, wrong interpretations of the women's values and roles in spiritual books, the long standing patriarchal structures in the religious institutions, and stereotypic attitudes towards women together with lack of women's self-aggrandizement, which is culturally inherited and socially imposed self-construct, are the major challenges that stifled the engagement of women in public and leadership affairs in general and in peace and reconciliation activities in particular. Longstanding perception of the wider community on the role women could play in peace and reconciliation was reported as a major challenge that hinder women of faith to engage in peace and reconciliation. Changing this requires a mind-shift by the community and even some sectors on how they view the role of women.

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<sup>22</sup> Faith in Action: Ethiopian Faith Based organizations' (FBOs) Humanitarian Emergency Response (2013-2017)



## 5. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to map women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation. The report is a product of a qualitative study conducted with the major objective of mapping and documenting the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation processes. The study also intended to explore existing structures and platforms that women are part of or that are exclusively used by women both at local and national levels. In order to meet this objective, the study engaged relevant people from IRCE and its member institutions as well as representatives from the Minister of Peace through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The primary data for the study were generated through a structured interview and focus group discussion questions whereas the secondary information was generated through literature review and document analysis.

In general, the study revealed that women have the capacity, wisdom, and leverage to engage in peace and reconciliation endeavors. Most of the respondents who participated in this study agreed that the engagement of women in peace and reconciliation processes makes peace efforts more sustainable. All of the religious institutions engaged in this study revealed that their institutions recognize significant roles women of faith could play in peace and reconciliation; however, the practice depends on each institution's theological thoughts as well as internal norms and standards. From the study, it can be concluded that at least there are no major policy-related or institutional factors that deter women of faith to engage in peace and reconciliation. Not all religious institutions involved in this study may have an independent Peace Department in their organizational structure; however, peace and reconciliation have been part of their daily spiritual endeavors. On top of this, the institutions have their mechanisms to ensure the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation.

This study also indicated that women in general and women of faith, in particular, engage in peace and reconciliation activities; however, their participation is not to the expected level due to social, cultural, economical, and personal factors. In different cultural communities in Ethiopia, women engage in conflict resolution and reconciliation processes. In religious

institutions too, women are considered a symbol of peace. However, many respondents had a view that the existing social and cultural frameworks have not created an enabling environment for women to come to the front in peace and reconciliation activities. Due to the existing patriarchal system, there has been a long-standing perception that peace and reconciliation activities are men's duty. On the other hand, the lack of sustainable financial support to enhance the capacity of women of faith and help them engage in peace and reconciliation endeavors has constrained them to play their part. Lack of the necessary knowledge and skills in the areas of peace and reconciliation were also reported as personal factors that constrain women of faith to engage in peace and reconciliation. The study also revealed the ongoing institutional efforts to create women of faith networks and platforms to enhance their participation in peace and reconciliation activities can pave the way to addressing these limitations. Besides the ongoing effort by IRCE to compile from its member institutions theological perspectives on the role of women in peace and reconciliation can serve as institutional backing to enhance the role of women of faith in peace and reconciliation.

In general, there is a wider understanding among faith-based institutions regarding the role women of faith could play in peace and reconciliation. In the meantime, there is also a common understanding that women of faith need multi-layered and sustainable support to cater to what is expected of them. The supports could be both technical and financial and can be provided at institutional and individual levels. For effective implementation, tailoring, and fair distribution of supports, IRCE can bolster its current facilitative role to bring together its member institutions and also serve as a hub to channel the necessary supports to the existing women of faith structures.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that women of faith can play a significant role in peace and reconciliation; however, different factors hinder them to fully engage in these endeavors. The factors that hinder women of faith to engage in peace and reconciliation activities are multidirectional, as already described above, partly institutional, partly social, partly cultural, partly economic, and partly personal. As the sources of the factors are multidimensional, the measures to be taken to address the challenges should also be multifaceted and phase-based. Thus:

Religious institutions should demonstrate genuine commitment and determination to put in place systems and mechanisms that allow women of faith to use their skills and wisdom to make peace and reconciliation. Many of the religious institutions involved in this study either do not have strong peace departments or the peace departments do not engage women of faith in peace and reconciliation affairs. Apart from their contributions, women of faith in the different religious institutions do not have an organized and institutionally recognized network or platform through which they contribute their part in the areas of peace and reconciliation. To enhance the collaborative engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation endeavors, religious institutions should create a dedicated peace structure/unit or strengthen the existing ones to create safer spaces for the women groups. To this effect, the IRCE should be supported to play a leading role in organizing the member institutions to create/strengthen peace and reconciliation departments; women of faith platforms specific to the theological foundation of each religious institution, and further build network women peacebuilders. This could be possible by providing the necessary technical and financial supports to IRCE which can be devolved to its member institutions depending on their specific needs and interests. IRCE should also be supported to organize successive dialogue forums for top religious leaders to help them exchange views and perspectives regarding women of faith's engagement in public affairs in general and peace and reconciliation in particular.

Support the development of national and regional peace policies. National and regional

policies that ensure the engagement of women in conflict prevention, reconciliation, and peacebuilding should also be developed by the government. To this effect, faith-based organizations can lobby the Ministry of Peace to develop and implement peace policies and strategies which is inclusive in all aspects including the engagement of women in general, and women of faith in particular. Religious institutions should also be supported to adapt the national/regional peace policies and strategies to their religious context and ensure the engagement of women of faith in national peace and reconciliation affairs.

In-depth analysis on the role of women in peace and conflict. The local literature on the role of women of faith in peace and reconciliation is very scant. Participants of this study believe that women of faith may have contributed a lot in the areas; however, their works have not been well studied. Thus, technical and financial supports should be provided to the religious institutions to conduct national and regional studies on the contribution of women of faith in the areas of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding as well as on the impeding factors against women's participation in these areas. To ensure coordination among the religious institutions and their study teams, the IRCE can play a leading role in mobilizing, redistributing, and administering the required resources for the studies; creating research consortium, and consolidating findings.

Transform the overall perception and attitude of the religious communities towards women of faith's engagement in peace and reconciliation affairs. The perceptions and attitude of society in general, and religious communities in particular towards the engagement of women in religious affairs determine their engagement in peace and reconciliation. Thus, religious institutions should be supported to organize different events that will help transform the awareness of the wider religious communities in general on the capacity, wisdom, and skills of women of faith in resolving and transforming conflicts. To perform this, religious institutions should be provided with financial supports.

Create spaces for women in religious institutions to engage them in peace and reconciliation affairs. The patriarchal system in different religious institutions was reported as one of the factors that stifle women of faith's engagement in peace and reconciliation. To address this challenge, the IRCE should be supported to organize workshops, symposiums, and experience sharing platforms for its member institutions to help them cross-fertilize

ideas and widen the space for women of faith among the respective institution's peace and reconciliation endeavors.

Provide the short-term, medium-term, and long-term technical and financial support that ensures sustainable engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation processes. As the study indicated, activities of the women's departments and peace departments in the religious institutions are constrained by a lack of sustainable financial backing. Due to the absence of a budget, the departments in most of the religious institutions could not make a full-fledged plan and execute peace and reconciliation activities. As a result, peace and reconciliation activities in the religious institutions are usually annexed to other programs. Due to budget constraints, the departments are understaffed and the limited number of staff in the departments are also expected to perform multiple tasks. Consequently, women in religious institutions could not organize events that could help them mobilize a large number of women for peace and reconciliation. To alleviate this challenge, the departments should be budgeted and also provided with sustainable technical and financial supports that help women of faith to fully engage in peace and reconciliation affairs. There should also be a budget for the peace departments to establish women peace groups in the religious institutions and empower them through training in peace and reconciliation. The Church officials should also be provided capacity-building training on the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation.

Enhance and transform the knowledge and skills of women of faith in the areas of peace and reconciliation. Lack of knowledge, skills, and confidence was also reported as one of the underlying factors that hinder women of faith from engaging in peace and reconciliation activities. Enhancing their capacity through training and different awareness-raising strategies can directly contribute to building their capacities and confidence to engage in peace and reconciliation. Thus, the Peace Departments and the Department of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs of the IRCE and its member institutions should be provided with technical and financial support that will help them organize capacity-building training to enhance knowledge and skills. IRCE should also be supported to play a leading role to organize various international, regional, national, and local workshops, symposiums, seminars as well as experience-sharing platforms. There should also be systems or mechanisms through which the trained individuals are linked to the peace departments

of the respective religious institutions. It is also vital to uplift the competent female peace actors to top leadership and decision-making positions so that others can see them and be motivated for similar responsibilities.

Religious /theological institutions must develop courses for upcoming religious leaders on the role of women in peace and reconciliation. Since systematic and structural alienation of women of faith participating in peace and dialogue is cultural, coupled with deep-rooted rationalized practices in almost all religious traditions, it is important to cultivate religious leaders who are aware and capable of appreciating women's role in peace and reconciliation. This will contribute to creating a positive attitude among the upcoming religious leaders, which in turn will create favorable conditions for women's overall participation in decision-making positions.

Engage media to regularly amplify the voice of women of faith for peace and reconciliation. This media platform should bring women's voices for peace and reconciliation from local to policy levels. This can be made possible by organizing policy discussions, panel discussions, sharing stories from grassroots, and calling upon religious institutions and government to empower women.

## 7. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Respondents' Profiles

Table 1: Respondents' profile and means of engagement

No.	Name of respondents	Organization	Responsibility	Means of engagement
	Dechasa Herpesa	Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE)	Peace and Advocacy Director	KII
	Muna Mohammed	ECFE	FGM, Early/Forced Marriage Project Leader	FGD
	Kassim Wario	ECFE	Peacebuilding and Trauma Healing project field coordinator	
	Tekalign Shiferaw	ECFE	Peacebuilding & Trauma Project leader	
	Tadele Mammo	ECFE	Community forest project leader	
	Tadelech Loha	Mekane Yesus	Head of Women Office	KII
	Rev. DR. Bekure Daba	Mekane Yesus	Women Evan. Head	KII
	Abebech Kumsa	Mekane Yesus	Women Capacity Building Head	KII
	Pr. Seneshat Lake	Evangelical Believers Council	Director Spiritual Department	KII
	Rahwa Mussie	Ministry of Peace	Advisor for the state Minister	KII
	Kesis Tagay Tadele	Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia	Secretary-General	KII
	Mr.Gulay Weldegiorgis	Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat	Head of Justice and Peace Department	KII
	Mrs. Shartu Shemshedin	Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council	Women and Peace focal lady to Inter-Religious Women Platform	KII

	Mrs. Astede Girma	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church	Women focal lady to the Inter-Religious Women Platform	KII
	Sr. Tarikua Ayachew	Seventh-Day Adventist Church	Women and Children Department Dept Head	KII
	Mr. Mamo Wojega	IRCE	Peacebuilding Department Head	FGD
	Haji Mesud Adem	IRCE	Communications Dep. Head	
	Mr. Adane Dechassa	IRCE	Deputy Peace Dept. Head	
	Mrs. Tiruwork Gena	IRCE	Women and Children Dept. Head and coordinator of Inter-Religious women network/platform for peace	FGD
	W/t Metasebia Asefa	IRCE	Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Dept. Head	
	Pastor Yitagesu Hailemichael	IRCE	Regional Affairs Dept. Head	



## **Appendix 2: Reviewed Documents**

Reviewed NCA documents

Concerted efforts of FBOs to Abandon FGM & CEFM in Ethiopia: A Consolidated Report

Norwegian Church Aid Ethiopia Five Year Review 2011-2015

Norwegian Church Aid Ethiopia Annual Review 2016

Norwegian Church Aid Ethiopia Annual Review 2017

Norwegian Church Aid Civil Society Partnership Policy

Faith in Action: Ethiopian Faith-Based organizations' (FBOs Humanitarian Emergency Response (2013-2017)

Post-2015 National Girl Summit

### **Appendix 3: Data collection tool**

Interview and Focus Discussion Guide

#### **I. Checklist for literature review**

What are the roles of faith-based institutions in the arena of peace and reconciliation?

How faith women are implicated to engage in peace and reconciliation?

What are the global/regional/national/local policies, institutions, systems, and platforms that exist to ensure women's participation in peace and reconciliation?

How does the role of faith women explicate in these institutions, systems, and platforms?

What are the challenges women in general and faith women in particular encounter to engage in peace and reconciliation?

#### **KII Questions for IRCE**

What is your view on the roles of faith women in peace and reconciliation?

What do the existing coordination and collaboration among IRCE member institution's peace and reconciliation work look like? (Faith women's role in focus)

How do you see the engagement and participation of faith women of the member institutions in peace and reconciliation endeavors?

Do the member religious institutions have the structure for the participation/engagement of faith women in peace and reconciliation? How do you see their capacities? What are their gaps?

What do you think should be done to enhance the role of faith women in peace and reconciliation activities?

Key informant interview/focus group discussions questions for IRCE's member religious institutions

Does your institution engage in peace and reconciliation process?

If yes to question Qu.1, what are the major peace and reconciliation activities it carries out?

Do women involve in your institutions' peace and reconciliation endeavors?

If yes to Que. 2, on what basis do women perform their peace and reconciliation activities?

What systems, mechanisms, frameworks, platforms do exist to engage faith women in peace and reconciliation processes?

Do you think women are engaging in peace and reconciliation endeavors as it is stipulated in the policy/strategy?

Do you think their participation is good enough compared to their proportion in the faith? Why?

Is there any linkage among women of faith who are engaged in peace and reconciliation? Do they collaborate with other women peacebuilders?

What is your view on the role of faith women in peace and reconciliation and the trust they have as peacebuilders;

What is the theological base for the participation of women in peace and reconciliation?

What are the major challenges affecting women of faith engagement in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes?

What are the existing platforms/networks and coordination mechanisms led by women peacebuilders at local, regional, national levels in Ethiopia?

What do you think are the achievements of women in these platforms/networks?

Do you think faith women are participating in peace and reconciliation as it is expected of them?

Is there any organization that supports faith women to engage in peace-building and reconciliation endeavors? If yes, would you mention them?

What do you think should be done to enhance the participation of women in peace and reconciliation processes?

What is/not working well in the participation of women of faith in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes,

**For non-religious institutions**

Do you have policies/strategies on the role of women in peace and reconciliation?

If yes, what are the major pillars of the policy/strategy?

How are the roles of women explicated in the policies/strategies?

**What are their constituencies at local and national levels;**

What national/regional platform/structure does exist to engage women in peace and reconciliation?

Does the structure reach the grassroots level?

Is there any linkage among the women peacebuilders and with other women groups who are engaged in similar activities?

What is/not working well in the participation of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes?

What are the major challenges affecting women's engagement in peacebuilding and reconciliation activities?

Is there any organization that supports women to engage in peace-building and reconciliation endeavors?

## **Appendix 4: Terms of Reference**

### **For Consultancy on Mapping Women of Faith Engagement in Peace and Reconciliation**

#### **1. Intervention Background**

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is an international non-profit organization mandated to work with people around the world to eradicate poverty and injustice. Guided by its vision 'Together for a Just World', NCA provides humanitarian assistance, supports long-term development. NCA is affiliated with the World Council of Churches and is a member of the ACT Alliance with a presence in 24 countries worldwide. In Ethiopia, NCA has been operating since 1974. NCA's programmes are implemented together with local faith-based partners. In Ethiopia, NCA is a member of various CSO networks, coordination mechanisms, and clusters.

In its new strategic period (2020-2024), NCA Ethiopia will focus on Climate Resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Faith-Based Climate Action, Peacebuilding, Gender-Based Violence/Sexual/ Reproductive Health, and Humanitarian Emergency Response.

Globally, NCA has a long history and experience in peacebuilding in more than 13 countries including a Regional Peace Programme covering the Horn and Great Lakes region of Africa. In Ethiopia, NCA has worked with religious actors on peacebuilding for a long period.

In our Current, Peacebuilding program, one of the interventions is a joint initiative in partnership with ACT Church of Sweden for three years (2019-2022). The programme is funded by the Swedish Embassy in Ethiopia and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is under implementation in partnership with key Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). The programme has three major outcomes stated as follows (please refer to the logic model attached with this

TOR for further details):

**Outcome 1:** Religious actors promote social cohesion, peace, and reconciliation at local and national levels,

**Outcome 2:** Women of faith's participation and influence in promoting social cohesion, peace, and reconciliation at local and national levels,

**Outcome 3:** Increased participation and influence of youth in peace processes

In working towards these outcomes and to achieve the objectives, the programme is working at national and local levels. At the national level, the key focus of the programme is enhancing coordination and collaboration among partners, including facilitation of regular joint platform meetings, facilitating and supporting periodic dialogues and initiatives on peace and social reconciliation involving key religious actors, women, men, and youth (which are key actors for NCA's peacebuilding intervention). The programme also facilitates learning and experience sharing events and builds the capacity of faith leaders, women, men, and youth in areas related to social cohesion, peace, and reconciliation.

At the local level, the key focus will be identifying, strengthening, and establishing formal and informal inclusive peacebuilding structures and creating an enabling environment for these structures to play an active role in peace and social cohesion processes (please refer to the attached programme theory of change for further details).

Geographically, the programme is implemented in West Wollega, Eastern Benishangul-Gumuz and in Gambella Regions in partnership with Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus – Peace Office, and North Gonder, North Shewa, and South Wello, in partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC). The programme facilitates peace dialogues and interventions related to peace and reconciliation with faith actors, women, and youth at national, regional, and local levels in partnership with the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE). The programme has also started the implementation of the peacebuilding project focusing on peace dialogue and community-managed resolution of conflicts in the Arsi-Bale area in partnership with the Ethiopian Muslims Development and Relief Association (EMRDA). Moreover, the programme facilitates various training, learning, and experience-sharing platforms for its partners and other relevant stakeholders. The programme also works in collaboration with other peacebuilding actors.

NCA is currently seeking a qualified consultant/s for mapping Women of Faith Engagement in Peace and Reconciliation Processes, which is linked to outcome 2 of its peace programme.

Therefore, consultants with relevant skills and experience are encouraged to apply for this exciting task. The details of the assignment are stated as follows:

## **2. Objectives of the Task**

The overall objective of the task is to map and document the engagement of women of faith in peace and reconciliation processes including existing structures, platforms that women are part of or that are exclusively used by women only both at local and national levels.

Specific Objectives of the task are stated as follows:

Objective 1: Map the Engagement of Women of Faith in Peace and Reconciliation Processes

- Map women of faith peacebuilders (who actively engage and influence the peacebuilding process) with the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) and its member religious organizations,
- Document their major roles, functions, and achievements and their constituencies at local and national levels,
- Document the views of religious actors on the role of women in peacebuilding and the trusts they have as peacebuilders,
- Identify and document the interlinkages among the women of faith peacebuilders and with other similar initiatives by women,

Objective 2: Identify Structures of Women of Faith Engagement in Peace and Reconciliation Processes

- Identify and document structures of women peacebuilders from national to local level,
- Document existing platforms/networks and coordination mechanisms women peacebuilders are part of or led by women at local, national, and regionally (Africa Region) and their role, functions, and achievements
- Identify and document organizations supporting women in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts

Objective 3: Document Lessons and Provide Key Recommendation pointing out strategies to enhance women of faith participation and influence in peace and reconciliation processes

- Document what is working well in the participation of women of faith in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes,
- Identify key challenges affecting women of faith engagement in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes,
- Provide key recommendations and critical areas that guide the peace-building programme to enhance the participation of women in peace and reconciliation processes.

### 3. Scope of the Mapping

This task will focus on two major areas. First, desk review of all available literature related to women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation processes. Second, conduct a detailed assessment with the following faith-based organizations:

- Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE),
- IRCE's selected member religious organizations, which can be prioritized in consultation with IRCE;
- Relevant government organizations including Ministry of Peace, Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, academic and research institutions, etc
- Any other related faith-based organizations supporting women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation processes including UN agencies.

The consultant should also include other relevant organizations related to this task and based on the review of the literature.

Overall, given the current context, the consultant/s is not expected to travel outside Addis but if the assessment from the national level shows the need for the travel to specific locations, that has to be clearly stated in the inception report and will be agreed upon accordingly.

### 4. Methodology

The consultant/s is expected to use mixed methods including a review of all available literature related to the theme and draw exemplary initiatives. The consultant/s is also required to conduct an in-depth interview with women of faith engaged in peace and reconciliation activities and this should include the leaders, experts, and other relevant individuals. The consultant/s should also explore other relevant sources of information to generate relevant data for the assessment.

The consultant/s is required to develop detailed methodologies with appropriate frameworks and tools necessary for the assessment and determine the structure of the report in line with the scope of the assignment. The inception report should be prepared detailing all the methods and tools, required including a budget, a list of organizations to be assessed and individuals to be interviewed.

#### 4.1 Key areas for in-depth analysis:

- Document the women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation processes including their structures, constituencies, geographic coverage, their networks, and available platforms, etc.
- Map in detail the women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation processes



from national to local level. This is related to what they do in this regard and document examples of those initiatives.

- Analyze and document the extent to which the interventions by the women of faith have been effective in promoting/ contributing to peace and reconciliation.
- Document and analyze major challenges affecting the engagement of women of faith in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes,
- Based on the above analysis, provide recommendations detailing key areas for support to enhance women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation processes, providing examples from other similar initiatives both within the country or elsewhere.

## **5. Expected Outputs/key deliverables**

The consultant/s is expected to produce the following key outputs/deliverables (all written in English):

- Inception report (maximum 5 pages) outlining the key methodologies, tools, work plan, and detailed budget and a clear timetable of activities,
- Draft report with datasets from the assessment findings and key documents reviewed and list of interviewed individuals as an annex,
- Validation workshop with NCA management, programme partners, and other key stakeholders,
- Final report involving inputs from NCA and key stakeholders from the validation workshop with key recommendations on enhancing women of faith engagement in peace and reconciliation processes. The final report should be a maximum of 30 pages excluding annexes. The final report should also include a list of key informants/interviewees and reference materials,

## **6. Timeframe**

The timeframe for the assessment is proposed as follows (there may be some flexibility within the line items, but maximum days remain the same):

- Review literature and develop inception report with detailed work plan: 4 days
- Interview key informants, detailed assessments with selected religious and other organizations including review of selected documents: 10 days,
- Draft reports with preliminary information from the assessment: 2 days
- Validation workshop with key stakeholders: ½ a day
- Final report incorporating comments from NCA and key stakeholders from the validation workshop: 3 and ½ days

## 7. Profile of the Consultant/s

Consultancy firms are selected based on the following criteria/standards:

- Postgraduate degree in Gender Studies, Social Work, Social Sciences, peacebuilding or any other related fields of study,
- Knowledge and proven experience working with faith-based organizations with a focus on women engagement at local and national levels,
- Knowledge on UNSCR 1325 and other resolutions on women's rights,
- Proven experience in conducting mapping of similar initiatives, participatory research with faith-based or other civil society organizations,
- Practical experience in working on issues of women empowerment in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes,
- Fluency in English and a good understanding of one or two local languages is an advantage,
- Familiarity with the current conflict dynamics in the country and sensitivity to conflict, ethnicity, and religion,
- Excellent report writing, data collection, and analysis skills.

## 8. Application Process

The applicant should submit a technical proposal with a curriculum vitae outlining the relevant background and work experience as stated in the TOR. These should be accompanied by official stamps /evidence from clients. Company experience in areas related to women and peace should be incorporated in the technical proposal with necessary evidence such as letters from previous clients. Bidder/s should submit in a separate envelope a bid bond CPO or Bank Grantee amounting to 2% of the bid price.

The bid will be closed on 3/06/2020 at 4:00 PM and the winner will be announced through formal email on 6/6/2020 and will be invited for a face-to-face meeting. Regret letters will also be issued on the same date for those who were not successful in their application.

NCA Ethiopia reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. Late bids will be rejected.

NCA Ethiopia

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