

PROCMURA PRICA



A Quarterly Newsletter of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa

Christian-Muslim relations issues: PROCMURA calls for wholistic approach

Ranging from the demand for understanding each other to creation of an environment where issues of common concern are addressed through joint efforts without prejudice, there is a sweeping challenge that these issues must not only be attended to in their own contexts

peace and peaceful coexistence in Africa. In order to do this and do it well, came a comment from one Christian-Muslim joint training session on HIV/AIDS, we must collectively accept that

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Scenes of destruction – above and below: these are common as a result of ethno-religious and politically as well as economically motivated violence across the continent and they can only be stopped if there is a comprehensive peaceful dialogical encounter between people of faith



but also the approach should be wholistic. This is according to lessons and experiences drawn from the organisation's long history of working in the area of building of good relations between Christians and Muslims and building their capacities for effective constructive engagement for

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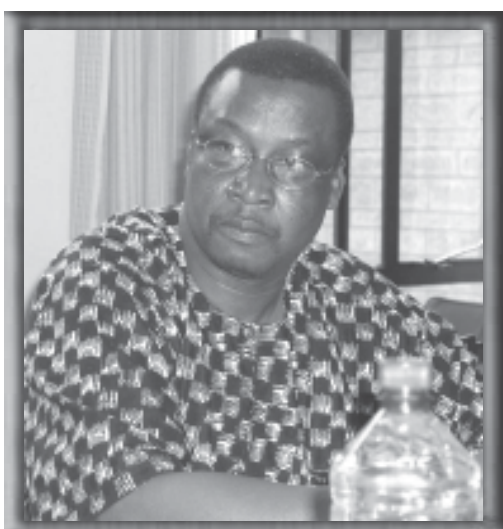
we have an obligation to our fellow human beings and to the society in spite of our religious differences’.

In articulating those areas that adherents of these two faiths have to inclusively and in a wholistic format deal with in the continent, the PROCMURA General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah points out that it has always been a tendency of some Christians and Muslims to run away from issues and events that affect their lives terming them dirty games. “If you fear giving direction or commenting on such matters as politics, since it is a dirty game, which is a preserve for others, then you must be ready to be led by those whose hands can readily be soiled, without raising complaints,” he commented.

Across the continent and digging deeper to grassroots living systems of the people of different faith convictions, it is obviously a fact that relations can be influenced by a combination of factors, both internal and external. Comprehensively, Dr. Mbillah goes on to say that issues, which impinge on people’s daily lives, must be addressed through a wholistic approach. It is on this basis that PROCMURA, with its long historical tradition of strengthening faithful Christian witness to the Gospel in an interfaith environment of Christians and Muslims and constructive engagement with Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence, has moved with zeal to streamline her programmes and

activities to ensure that matters of mutual concerns get full attention of both Christians and Muslims.

In a surprise turn of events and if the outcome of some of the Christian-Muslim joint gatherings



Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, the PROCMURA General Adviser indicates that the Organisation has already taken the challenge

are anything to by, reciprocal appreciation of building understanding of issues is much more important than running or shying away from them. A Muslim participant in the Ghana Christian-Muslim youth workshop on HIV / AIDS commented by pointing out that when such gatherings are called on, some participants come with ‘not-so-open minds’ and sometimes are sent to spy on what goes on and report back. This, according to the PROCMURA Area Adviser for Tanzania, Rev. Canon Thomas Godda, only points to the direction of embedded mistrust between and among people of faith. While agreeing to

the concept of destroying the mistrust as the first step in the direction of ensuring that people of faith, especially the Christians and Muslims, work together in achieving the ambition of PROCMURA, the organisational approach system has devolved more on the idea of identifying key areas that adherents of the two faiths can inject their energies for effective and wider output. Some of these activities include the women and youth approach to HIV/ AIDS, and Christian and Muslim leaders’ dedication to societal responsibilities. The former has proved a more vital tool in amalgamating collective approach and as commitment from the Ghanaian Christian-Muslim youth workshop said in part, ‘organise forums through which Christian and Muslim youth leaders can learn and appreciate their respective and other’s religious values and systems of beliefs’ and resolving to never again ‘be the tools of

...we must collectively accept that we have an obligation to our fellow human beings and to the society in spite of our religious differences...

destruction but rather be the agents of peace and understanding among the people in the community’.

In view of what is emerging as new trends within Africa, the problems and issues that affect



Religious communities have a moral obligation to fight HIV/AIDS pandemic, Tanzania youth say

In a call reminiscent to a reminder to the religious communities and leaders in the face of HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has ravaged the continent, Tanzania Christian and Muslim youth leaders concluded a four-day intensive training workshop with an urgent appeal for a more concerted effort to put to an end the disastrous effects of the disease as well as to find practical ways of addressing issues that negatively affect the relations between people of different faith communities.

The workshop, which attracted a total of 40 youth leaders from the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) and Baraza Kuu la Waislamu


Tanzania (BAKWATA which is the Supreme Council of Muslims in Tanzania) constituencies, brought out pertinent issues of concern that have been the bedrock of bad and good relations between Christians and Muslims in the country thereby covering much more than the primary objective - to enable the youth to

PROCMURA and wholistic approach on Christian-Muslim relations issues, from page 2

people's relations, PROCMURA has come to realise, can only be articulatively and effectively addressed within their own contexts. "It has come to our conclusion that the prescriptive method or dosage given to the problems affecting Christians and Muslims in Tanzania cannot be wholesomely given or applied to a situation of another country due to different social set-ups," commented Mr. Okok-Obuoga, the Literature and Communications Officer during the Tanzania youth workshop, while adding that it is imperative for the youth to clearly asses their situation, identify the real local issues and define what can be done locally to ameliorate the problems affecting the entire society.

In order to capture the whole idea of wholistic approach to Christian-Muslim issues in Africa, this issue of PROCMURA/PRICA Newsletter succinctly brings out those activities that PROCMURA undertakes in various forms – on its own and in collaboration with others – and

tackling all forms of matters that affect the lives of the people in Africa. In this issue therefore, we see how PROCMURA shares her experiences of Christian-Muslim relations with the Presbyterian Church of the United States, views, and feedback from those who have participated in various PROCMURA activities, and the outcome from the youth programme on HIV/AIDS in Tanzania. We also carry a story of the organisational participation in the just concluded World Social Forum (WSF) which was held in Nairobi, Kenya in which PROCMURA was represented by Mr. Kirk Harris, an intern from the Presbyterian Church of the United States.

Meanwhile, in the next issue, we anticipate to cover in details the outcome of the second PROCMURA and Cultural Division of the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS) exchange programme that was held in Egypt. This followed the first, which was held in November 2005. 



Rev. Canon Thomas Godda, the PROCMURA Area Adviser for Tanzania

define their national agenda on the fight against HIV/AIDS. In a characteristic similar to the previous workshops held in other countries, various strategic measures that were geared to widening the understanding of the young people in areas of HIV infection, spread and the consequences on one hand while on the other hand, look at those which could stimulate collective endeavours to the pandemic control and management from the religious point, were given a priority. Amongst these were paper presentations, group works, and plenary sessions. Apart from individual case studies within the small group sessions,

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Tanzania youth speak on the role of religious communities on HIV/AIDS pandemic, from page 3

participants had the opportunity of sharing among themselves issues they felt could have been neglected in the fight against the disease as well as areas they considered important for the people of faith especially the Christians and Muslims.

Key factor in paper presentations within the country context was to give, in details, the Islamic and Christian viewpoint, and teachings on attributes that touch the spread, the human behavioural patterns towards those infected and the affected, and the role of those institutions. They were also to stimulate and challenge the conscience of the youth leaders on the attitude and build them to a vantage point of understanding and appropriately addressing issues



Sheikh Omari Yahaya Bweso of BAKWATA explains a point to participants at the workshop in Morogoro

and complexities that evolve around Christian-Muslim relations in Tanzania.

In his introductory remark, the PROCMURA Tanzania Area Adviser, Rev. Canon Thomas Godda reiterated that the organisation has, for the last forty years, been engaged in the agenda of building good relations between Christians and Muslims in the continent bearing in mind that there exists a lot of common values between the two communities and that by using these values, the art of responsible and respectful actions along religious lines. “In

PROCMURA, we have always endeavoured at finding and helping both Christians and Muslims address issues of common concern through mutual

...challenges and problems facing the humanity as a result of the disease have made it in such a way that people must cooperate beyond sectional differences especially religious lines...

partnership and cooperation,” he said, while giving a specific example of the Youth programme on HIV/AIDS. This workshop therefore, he said, comes out as an example of such actions and I urge all of you to take it seriously. Mentioning key areas that may conjure participants’ minds in looking at their own context with the view of developing common working partnership, Rev. Godda spoke of the tasks such as lobbying and advocacy on matters that affect people’s living but of which they seem not to be aware; and ensuring that women’s and youth’s capacities are built in order that they also participate and effectively contribute to the betterment of the society.

He said that these are part and parcel of PROCMURA’s focus in enabling Christians and Muslims view each other

as members of the same humanity and therefore have duty and obligations to serve those they live with in the same society.

On their part and while acknowledging the work of PROCMURA in involving the Muslim community in the fight against the pandemic, the two leaders of the Islamic community in Tanzania, Sheikh Ally Omari Ngara and Sheikh Omari Yahaya Bweso,

commented that the challenges and problems facing the humanity as a result of the disease have made it in such a way that people must cooperate beyond sectional differences especially religious lines. The two, both BAKWATA Morogoro branch officials, however added that for this to be fruitful, detailed level of understanding must be achieved between people of faith and in this particular one, the Christians and Muslims. “All Muslims of goodwill and who mean well to peaceful living in the society will support the agenda of constructive engagement for peace being pursued by PROCMURA especially as it evolves around the feature of addressing a common agenda of making human’s problems less painful,” said Sheikh Ally Omari Ngara. His colleague, while giving an example of a situation where a highly airborne infectious disease affecting a village will not discriminate between religions but rather affect all who breath that air, added that the pandemic may not choose whom to strike along the religious divide. In promising their full support in the idea of developing common strategies in fighting the pandemic, they both assured PROCMURA and the Christian Council of Tanzania that BAKWATA will always be ready to join hands with them in order to work together. “In BAKWATA, we shall be ready to work with you for the sake of building a common goodness of humanity,” they said in conclusion while requesting that the outcome of the workshop should be circulated with all the action-oriented plans so that each and every individual takes an action.

On the account of the so far actions in the line of youth – Christian and Muslim – leaders engagement in the fight against the HIV/AIDS disease in the continent, the Literature and Communications Officer of PROCMURA, Mr. Okok-Obuoga, told those present that it is encouraging to see that Christian and Muslim youth, in spite of their religious differences, have found it important that they work together to address the negative effects of the pandemic. He said that this is important since the disease is a no respecter of religions thus affects both Christians and Muslims. He elaborated that the country programmes that were being carried out were aimed at articulating national issues that would ultimately build into the regional focus on HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis the role of young people. Mr. Okok, who also doubles as the organisational person in charge of youth programmes,

explained that the Tanzania workshop is therefore expected to have a contribution to the Eastern Africa agenda and hence joining Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya to form the regional focus on the control and management of the



A section of the participants keenly following the proceedings

pandemic through the use of Christian and Muslim teachings. “The process is anticipated to move a notch higher where the views from all the three regions – West Africa (both Anglophone and Francophone), and Eastern Africa – will bring in the PROCMURA’s continental position of youth and HIV/AIDS control and management,” he said. In responding to a question by a participant on the general agenda of PROCMURA with the mind of the involvement of youth, the PROCMURA Central Office representative at the workshop said that the ultimate objective of youth involvement is to ensure that Christians and Muslims do not only live in peace but also

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Tanzania youth speak on the role of religious communities on HIV/AIDS pandemic, from page 5

understand each other in addition to working together on issues of common concern. He mentioned one of the common concerns as HIV/AIDS.

On the area of identification and thematic deliberation on issues, the workshop realised presentation of two strategic papers - the Christian and Islamic perspectives in the fight against HIV/AIDS - that aimed at providing opportunities through which participants learnt the Islamic and Christian values and tenets in regard to attending to the

sick, the suffering and the destitute members of the society.

In a combination format of presentation, Sheikh Ally Omari Ngara and Sheikh Omari Yahaya Bweso, both from BAKWATA, took the participants through the Islamic teachings giving extensive analogy of what the Qur'ân says in various circumstances. Saying that both Christians and Muslims have many things in common, the presenter talked of ways through which these factors can be harnessed to build good relations. The good relations, they said, could be the starting point in

addressing issues of common concern in the society one of which is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. "I urge you not to shy away from giving your views on matters that concern this nation and as people of faith, you have the responsibility to do so since by making the lives of other people better, you will be pleasing Allah," Sheikh Omari Bweso said. He added that one thing that has been so divisive in Tanzania is the element of misinterpretation of the religious teachings especially by the street preachers. These preachers have always taken

Women dig deeper into issues of mutual concern as PROCMURA takes her experience to the United States

A Muslim woman says she never expected that kind of warm and closer interactions in the United States

Engaging each other in finding solutions to common problems especially through experience sharing became one of the fundamental subjects during the visit to the United States of America by the PROCMURA's Women's and Education Programme Coordinator, Rev. Angéle Dogbe and Miss. Shaney Swaleh Salim, a committed and practicing Muslim, and a counsellor at a drug rehabilitation Centre located in Malindi, one of the Kenya's Coastal cosmopolitan towns. The October – November 2006

three-week programme which was sponsored by the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America as part of an ongoing interfaith programme to cultivate understanding between faiths, enabled the two PROCMURA representatives together with others including Presbyterian Church of United States delegates to dig deeper into the global issues especially on how they affect the women.

On their return, Rev. Angéle and Miss. Swaleh shared their experiences, lessons learnt, and challenges which, according to them, may look big but nonetheless, surmountable.



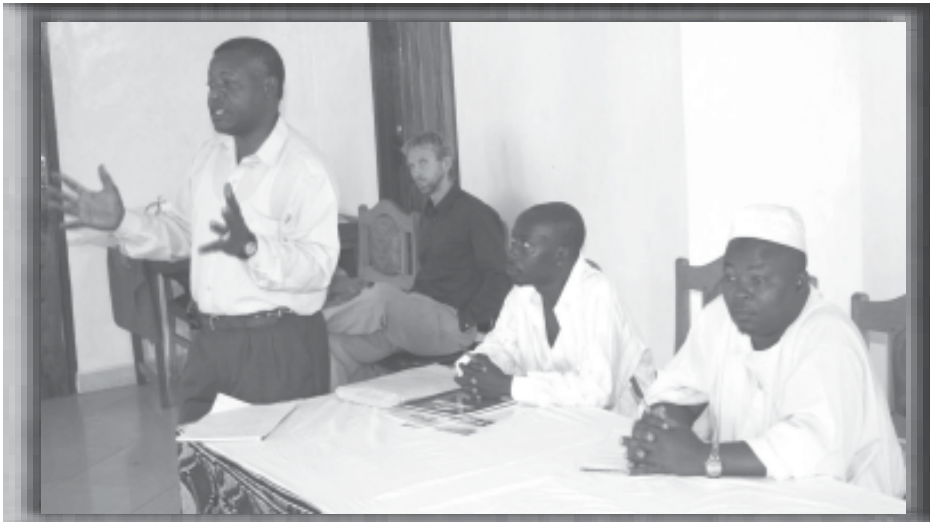
Rev. Angéle (left) and Miss. Swaleh (centre) and one other participant (partly hidden) in one of the sessions

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advantage of the people's ignorance and given that they do not understand what the teachings mean, they end up giving

pandemic with the view of providing the Islamic perspective in its control and prevention, they both said that the teachings of Islam as a religion and a way of life is very clear and there is no contradiction especially on what one should do in order to avoid infection and if



Rev. Canon Godda (standing) charging the participants at the opening of the workshop. With him are two Islamic Sheikhs Ngara (seated right) and Bweso (centre); and Mr. Harris, an intern at the PROCMURA Central Office, Nairobi

infected, what actions to take. "It is very cogent even in regard to how the uninfected persons should treat and act towards those who are infected and the affected in the society," commented Sheikh Ngara, while adding that it is the nature of humanity and not religion that makes people not treat their fellow human beings well. In saying that the challenge of HIV/AIDS pandemic and the problems associated with it present and open a natural invitation to people of faith especially the

inflammatory messages, he said. "In these kinds of sensational environments, it is not possible to tell Christians and Muslims to work together on matters such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic", Sheikh Ally Ngara said. He therefore proposed that getting to know one another better is important as this would build and realise trust. He however said that realising that there is a common enemy that must be subdued by both Christians and Muslims is also another way which can be utilised to bring adherents of both communities appreciate their common humanity. He further advised that if this route is taken, then the participants must ensure that there is no discrimination in all aspects but more so, in the line of religious affiliation.

Christians and the Muslims to think and work together, the speakers told the youth that they have a major unquestionable role to play in ensuring that the spread of the pandemic is curtailed. "You are the ones who will lead the society out of this menace and therefore your acceptance to come and join hands in this kind of a workshop without prejudice is an indicator that it can be done," they said. While giving examples of practical teachings from the Qur'an on the factors that have been highly associated with the spread of the pandemic, they said that the Book is totally against fornication and adulterous behaviour. "The teachings for example as found in the Surah 17:32, urge the Muslims not even to move closer to adultery acts," they pointed out and they were quick to add that if people stopped to even think

...we support PROCMURA's idea of building harmonious relations between Christians and Muslims and addressing issues of common concern such as HIV/AIDS through youth efforts and in BAKWATA; we shall be ready to contribute to your efforts that will meet these objectives...

about fornication or having extramarital sexual relationships, the rate of spread would not be the way it is today.

Turning their attention to the subject matter, the HIV/AIDS

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Women on issues of mutual concern and PROCMURA's experience, from page 6

According to Rev. Dogbe, the American interfaith environment is such a way that prior to the infamous September 11, 2001 twin terrorist attack in the United States, the problem of interfaith conflicts between Christians and Muslims was viewed as a minor issue as compared to other challenges as regional wars, poverty, diseases, and other human-related catastrophes faced by the world. After this event, followed by the invasion of Iraq and its results, she says, the Islam phobic attitude based on *inter alias* misconceptions and stereotypes of Muslims have encroached human's minds and have become one of the major problems to contend with in the world in general, and the United States in particular. "The misconceptions about Islam as a religion and Muslims as followers of that religion, are being aggravated everywhere and this has deepened the division between them (the Muslims) and non-Muslims especially the Christians," she said. As a result of this, Pastor Angéle explained, Christians and Muslims (Men and Women) see each other with

two faiths to fold their arms and watch as if things are all right. Instead, they said as if in unison; there is a dire need for both Christians and Muslims; women and men, to get to know each other better in order to work towards pacification of the relations



Participants (above) listening to one of the sharing sessions addressed by the PROCMURA team, Rev. Angéle and Miss. Swaleh

...misconceptions which are being aggravated everywhere has deepened the division between the Muslims and non-Muslims especially the Christians...

misgivings and mistrust and therefore, the relations between the two only hinges on a slim position where any little false step or word from any of them can generate a global confrontation. In this current state of affairs, Rev. Angéle, a Methodist Pastor from Togo who is based at the PROCMURA Central Office in Nairobi, Kenya, and her Muslim counterpart, Miss. Swaleh, both agree that it is not wise for adherents of these

between the religious communities in the world, breaking down the existing barriers and stereotypes, and building the blocks of understanding and appreciation of differences that are present. "Based on this contemporary living situation, several actions have been initiated and are being undertaken by men and women of good-will whose dedications are geared towards peace and peaceful coexistence between adherents of different faith communities including the Christians and Muslims," said Pastor Angéle in justifying the purpose of the programme. The programme is carried under the stewardship of the Worldwide Ministries Division's Interfaith Relations Office and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, in partnership with Congregational Ministries Division's Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, and has developed the Interfaith Listening Pilot Project which has critically shown the commitment of the Presbyterians to engage in interfaith conversation to seek understanding. The project, whose *raison d'être* is



to bring to the United States, annually, two people comprising of a Christian and a non-Christian, views, the sharing of experiences of the realities and challenges of living together in spite of religious differences as well as interfaith relations, and whose end result is to bring together, especially, Christians and Muslims, as a new model of realising a peaceful world.

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Upheaval in Nigeria as Kenyan Archbishop calls for deeper understanding of the Muslims

Nigeria: *Bad relations rears ugly head again*

In September 2006, tension was rife in Jigawa State, Nigeria following some confrontations between Christians and Muslims, which resulted, into destruction of properties including an Anglican Cathedral and a Bishop's office. The religious unrest in this state, one of the hot spots in terms of religious conflicts in the country, which erupted on 19th September is said to have been sparked off by an alleged blasphemous comment on Muhammed, the prophet of Islam by a Christian woman. On the other hand, the woman is alleged to have spoken in reaction to a similarly irreverent statement about Jesus Christ by a male Muslim. According to the *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) of September 22, 2006*, Rt. Rev. Yesufu Lumu, Bishop of Dutse said that he was concerned that the "police would not respond to the calls for protection from the Christians," on that fateful day.

Based on the information reaching PROCMURA Central office nobody was hurt though the event has left mistrust between


Christian and Muslim communities in the area. Such actions, utterances, and upheavals, especially in this religiously and ethnically tense and blood-soaked country is a big worry. It is our prayer that positive actions would be taken not only to cool down tempers but also to address the issue of ignorant preachers who make inflammatory remarks on other faith values. PROCMURA recognises the efforts by some religious leaders in the work of building good relations between people of faith and urge that they also rebuke their own flocks who cast aspersions on others which can cause violence.

Kenya – *do not give blanket condemnation to the Muslims, says a Catholic Archbishop*

While calling for more tolerance between and among people of faith in Kenya, a Catholic Archbishop said that the general perception of Muslims as terrorists and perpetrators of violence is wrong and stands in the way of honest cooperation. According to Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) *Issue No. 838, Tuesday, March 13, 2007*, Archbishop Boniface Lele of Mombasa, said that Muslims are ordinary peace loving citizens who are unfortunately associated with violence and terrorist activities.

"We have isolated cases of Muslims who sympathise with their brothers in terrorist and unlawful activities but that is no reason to give a blanket condemnation to our brothers and sisters," he said.

While supporting the government action on deportation of illegal immigrants from Somalia, the archbishop urged the government to grant refuge to all genuine refugees from neighbouring countries.

This call for mutual understanding of each other comes in the wake of the threat issued by the Muslim community to stage a demonstration to disrupt the much awaited World Cross Country championships (WCCC) scheduled for March 24, 2007 unless the Kenyan government brings back Kenyans whom they claim to have been repatriated by the government to Somalia. 



Tanzania youth speak on the role of religious communities on HIV/AIDS pandemic, from page 7

On the areas that have been identified as those factors that encourage sexual acts among the young people such as the media and commercials that promote pornographies, the two Islamic leaders from Morogoro lamented that it is absurd that the government is not doing much to bring this under control.

In giving the view of how to conduct awareness and advocacy as tools for stopping the spread of the disease, the two leaders said that the provision of education is very important. They however said that it is important to get relevant education from those who have a wide knowledge in the area and therefore it is of paramount importance to make sure that if one is talking about the disease, he/she must be able to express issues from the point of knowledge. One

material resources and giving words of encouragement in life. It is important to know that all these are found in the teachings of the Bible and Qur'ân and therefore, both Christians and Muslims have no reason not to help the infected and the affected.

In conclusion, the speakers, who also played a crucial role in the mobilisation of the participants given their positions in BAKWATA, commended those who came up with the idea of bringing together the Christian and Muslim youth leaders to address the problems and challenges caused by the pandemic from the Islamic and Christian positions. In particular, they paid tribute to PROCMURA saying that they are very encouraged with the programme and are highly elated that the organisation works with a main purpose of building

good relations between Christians and Muslims. "This is a departure from what is usually the norm in the society where one would say that either you belong to my religion or we don't work together," they said.

From the Christian perspective, Rev. Mathias Mdumah of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) in Morogoro, started by pointing out that not everybody would get this kind of an opportunity to interact and learn about issues that affect the society.

He therefore urged the participants to take and treat the session with seriousness and ensure that what they learn is spread to others not present. In reiterating the urgency of working together as Christians and Muslims, the speaker said that given that the two religions have a deep commonality even in some of their faith traditions, their adherents are called upon to do all that is within their ability to address such problems.



Two of the Muslim delegates sharing ideas over the workshop agenda before expressing their (Islamic youth) gratitude to PROCMURA for undertaking such initiative

must be able to state the facts and findings that are relevant based on the truth, they added. "Getting relevant knowledge is not the only way to stop the spread but must be strengthened by addressing the problems of the pandemic by making those who are infected and affected feel taken care of and secure. This can also go a long way in abating the situation," they added. This, they said, can be done by visiting and praying for the infected especially as joint groups of Christians and Muslims, helping them with



While making a grand call for positive action from the participants, Rev. Mdumah said that those who are infected with the HIV live under great stress and therefore what they need most is care, love, and support, and these can come from all in spite of ones religious affiliation. "I therefore

It is therefore upon the religious people to provide these people with all that they need and involve them in the day-to-day affairs of the society without segregation. The Bible has deep explanation and instructions on how to interact with such people, how to encourage them and the kind of help that can be given.

In entreating the participants to the factors and causes for the high spread of the virus, Rev. Mdumah attributed the spread to the breakdown of social and cultural fabric and pointed out that according

to Christian teachings, the main source is through breaking of the sixth commandment which warns against adultery acts. In the same vein, he said that as much as the scientists would say that AIDS is the 'condition of the body being deficient of immunity and hence exposing it to other infections', the situation begins when one lacks the spiritual strength of being righteous. In this case, he added, one must be ready to immune his/her spirituality against unrighteousness or from those things that may result into weakening of faith. He went on to say that sin, which weakens one's spirituality, opens the door to one's inability to resist



Rev. Mdumah of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania giving the Christian perspective on the fight against HIV/AIDS

challenge you as young people to demonstrate these values to our brothers and sisters who are living with HIV or AIDS since it is an onus for all of us to make their lives less painful," he said. In addition, he categorically said that by expressing love and inclusive attitude towards the sick, they, in turn, would also generate the feelings of being human and hence have hope. It has been realised, he continued, that by doing so, the infected will not have the spirit of revenge which, in most cases, have driven them to either spread the disease or even commit suicide.

temptations. "As a result, there exists two levels of deaths, one which is known as spiritual death caused by sinning hence cutting out relationship with God, and the other physical death where the spirit comes out of the body," he explained.

In his paper, Rev. Mdumah urged the youth to protect themselves from spiritual death. He gave a Biblical example of Hezekiah whose problem was both of body (physical) and spiritual. The challenge in Hezekiah's situation just like in any circumstances in our contemporary society, he said, is that both the problems, the physical and spiritual, needed solutions. "Like the situation of King Hezekiah, Christians today have obligations to help others mend their relations with God as this may be a major source for redeeming human relations," he advised. He added that when doing so, it may not matter whom you are helping as long as it is for the good of humanity.

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Women on issues of mutual concern and PROCMURA's experience, from page 9

While in the United States, the team visited and spoke to various congregations, Presbyteries, Theological Colleges, and local communities. It was at one of their public appearances at the First Presbyterian Church in Lansing that to their surprise, they realised how critical the issue of interfaith relations was to the Church judging by the number of people in attendance and excitement the process aroused among them. To the congregation, participation by and sharing of PROCMURA

Narrating the new experiences in practical interactions in an environment of religious pluralism, the PROCMURA's Women's and Education Programme coordinator talks of the imperative need for in-depth understanding and appreciation of local cultures in order to have a wider view of humanity. Coming explicitly out of the programme, she said that the experience enabled the participants to assess the roots of religious misunderstanding in other cultures and to learn from activities being undertaken



“Glad to meet you,” seems to be what Miss. Swaleh from Kenya is saying to other delegates in the Interfaith Listening Project. With her, amongst others, is Rev. Angele (left) of PROCMURA

experience was fascinating. In his introductory and welcoming remark, Rev. Anthony Patrick, a pastor at the First Presbyterian Church and a member of the hosting team, said in part, “These kinds of visits and mutual exchanges help in breaking down stereotypes of our faith traditions and get us on a path that might result in more common work among all the different religious groups”.

During the visit and while expressing her shock on the warm welcome they received, Miss. Swaleh said that she was fearful that being a Muslim, no one would want to greet or even sit next to her. On the contrary, “I am delighted and feel very much at home given the kind hospitality you have accorded me. This is a story I have to carry home to my people,” she said, given that this was her first trip to the United States.

by others towards building good relations between Christians and Muslims. “When we compare the reality as lived in Africa in the matter of religious pluralism as African women and the reality elsewhere especially in the United States, I think that there is a difference in our context,” she said while adding that, “As African women, we have luckily come to realise that we are facing so many problems that it is meaningless for us to involve ourselves in fighting because of our religious differences, instead we are able to work easily together on various issues affecting us”. She further said that on the contrary, in the

United States, the media as well as Christian and Muslim extremists have done a lot of damage to the Islamic faith to the extent that coexistence with each other is proving rather difficult. “You have to know that it may be challenging to live together in the same society as people from different faith backgrounds but it is not impossible to do so especially when you have in your possession structures of positive engagement”, she posed.

Turning their attention to the experiences drawn from the trip, which accordingly, they believe could help PROCMURA to address some of the continental issues, the two women leaders who attributed their close relation to the joint struggle in helping Christian and Muslim women in Africa deliberate on and find solutions to life-threatening issues such

as HIV/AIDS, spoke of the need of seeking more knowledge on respective and others' religious values. As a result of this, they pointed out that religious and interfaith institutions such as PROCMURA should do all that is within their programme abilities to enable Christians and Muslims alike get profound understanding of certain sensitive religious tenets

Jesus said, 'Go and do the same,'" she challenged the participants. She entreated the participants to a light moment when she likened the situation to the relationship between the current world's sworn enemies – the United States President, George W. Bush and the fugitive Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda Network. "Let us assume that it is George W. Bush who was the wounded traveller; Osama Bin Laden could be the Good Samaritan, or vice versa," she said, while adding that this is the kind of relationship people must pursue.



Some of the delegates from the Presbyterian Church USA sharing ideas over the project during a break

such as Islamic Jihad instead of just taking them on face value. This, they said, would make people appreciate their values instead. On her part in this particular subject, Pastor Angéle opined that Christians have a challenge to understand that Jesus, the author and perfecter of the Christian faith, did not just introduce religion into the world but a lifestyle.

"We as Christians need to transcend religious barrier in the practice of our faith and this is clearly exemplified in the story of the Good Samaritan," she said. While further explaining the parable, she expounded that the people who were highly expected to help the badly-wounded traveller did not do so and instead, the Samaritan, who was stereotyped as a bad man in the society, was the one who came to the man's aid without asking which religion he belonged to. "And

position to talk peace but also walk peace. They added that it is of great essence to understand that the problems affecting people in a certain society confront them not because of their religious affiliations but because of their common humanity, and that it is a mistake to condemn the whole religion

...the greatest commandment of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is to love God and our neighbour and this neighbour can be a person who does not share your faith; and as much as it depends on us, we should be at peace with all...

or faith by an attitude or action of an individual who happens to belong to that particular religion.

"In the Bible, the greatest commandment of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is to love God and

(👉 continued on page 17)



Tanzania youth speak on the role of religious communities on HIV/AIDS pandemic, from page 11

While elaborating the position of the Church over controversial means of controlling the pandemic such as the use of the condoms, the speaker stated that the Church has never supported the use of condoms in the fight against the pandemic. "Indeed, the Church has always indicated that the only sure way of stopping the virus is through abstinence, for those who are unmarried, and faithfulness for those who are already married," he explained. He regretted that due to actions and words by few people within Christianity that condom use can reduce the spread of the disease has been taken to mean that Christianity supports the use of the condoms. He also added that the teachings of Christianity forbids fornication and adultery and even looking at what Saint Paul writes to the Church in Corinth that they should flee from fornication.

...prayer times and days will be utilised to get more people involved while, on the other hand, ensure that the leaders in respective communities take the leading role both in the fight against HIV/AIDS and giving messages of good relations...

In commenting on the dangers of carrying out programmes such as anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns separately, the Church leader said that it is due to disjointed efforts by different players that great impacts have not been realised.

"Everybody wants to achieve something on their own and no one is ready to work with others," he lamented while expressing his satisfaction that the joint Christian and Muslim youth agenda under the armpit of PROCMURA is a good idea that needs all the support. In this, he encouraged PROCMURA and the Christian Council of Tanzania to see to it that the plans developed in the workshop are not shelved but rather implemented.




A group photo of the participants to the Tanzania Christian and Muslim youth leaders workshop on the Control and Prevention of HIV/AIDS

In their action plan, participants, among other things, indicated their intention to use their respective community-based instruments to spearhead the message of working together in addressing matters of mutual concern in the society. To ensure that this is done effectively, the Muslim and Christian participants will respectively use their prayer times and days to involve others while on the other hand ensure that the leaders in respective communities get involved. They requested

PROCMURA, BAKWATA, and CCT for all the support, which included constant communication and feedback as well as having them participate in other similar forums. One thing that highly came out of the evaluation comments was the fact that there was no medical expert to give an input and respond to matters relating to issues of HIV/AIDS on medical grounds. This made

participants miss an important part of knowledge required in conducting the awareness. They therefore requested that in the next workshop, arrangement should be made to have such a person.

All the participants, according to the evaluation forms, were in agreement that the idea behind this programme was an excellent one and they would wish to use the opportunity to widen their scope of collaboration in Tanzania. 



A story worth re-telling, impression on PROCMURA Christian-Muslim Youth and HIV/AIDS programme

By Bernard Okok-Obuoga, PROCMURA Literature and Communications Officer

When reading an article by Rev. Jay T. Rock, the Coordinator for interfaith relations at the Worldwide Ministries Division of Presbyterian Church of USA, under the title 'Part of our song' appearing in the Magazine for Presbyterian Women *Horizon of May/June 2005*, I get enthralled when he talks of 'mission personnel coming home telling stories of profound relationships of collaboration and personal faith-sharing with, among others, their neighbours who may happen to be of other faith backgrounds but amongst whom they lived'.

Christian and Muslim youth leaders across the African continent on a daily basis find themselves in this kind of scenario where they, thanks to PROCMURA Youth Programme on HIV/AIDS, tell of their experiences, challenges and opportunities of living with the 'other'. As one of the Ahmadiyya Muslim delegate at the 17th – 19th August 2006 Ghana workshop sincerely and succinctly put it, "if we had known that it would be this kind of a workshop, we would have invited and even sponsored more of our people to attend".

In my opinion and judging from personal first-hand experience, the Ghana workshop, like others which took place before and after, opened a door to the youth leaders to openly and honestly engage one another on principles of eradicating the HIV/AIDS pandemic but also gave the challenge of discarding radical political actions that have usually been spearheaded by particular members of the society with an aim of achieving their own parochial objectives. In most cases, as I learnt from these interactions, the youth, based on their energies and zeal to act, usually fight wars they do not know and more often than not, engage in actions of whose consequences they do not comprehend. This, therefore, calls for more awareness, advocacy, team building, solidarity, and promotion of information exchange activities.

From July 2005 Uganda event to the November 2006 Tanzania gathering, a total of six national trainings have been carried out. From all these, one thing that remains common among the youth leaders who participated in these workshops is the fact that discussion and actions on how to end the pandemic and be able to address its related problems must endure themselves to the local relational scenario. To this extent, I learnt that Rwanda youth would wish to see issues of violence and its relation to the HIV/AIDS spread explained and addressed while



Christian and Muslim youth leaders during the Uganda PROCMURA-organised workshop in 2005

the Nigerians, according to their communiqué, want collective efforts of the government and religious (Christian and Islamic) institutions to combat indecent behaviours such as dressing especially among the students and young people, and put to a stop irresponsible media practices that promote pornography. Still in the same breadth, the Kenyan youth, both Christians and Muslims, collectively demonstrated their understanding and overcame what could be described by then a bad 'bloodline' between the Christian and Muslim communities in the country which was brought about by respective communities taking different position on some section of the then proposed constitution draft. One of the guests who attended the opening ceremony expressed her amazement when she said, "It is my surprise that in spite of what is going on in the country including different faiths taking strong stands for or against the proposed constitution draft

☞ *continued on page 16*

impression on PROCMURA Christian-Muslim Youth and HIV/AIDS programme, from page 15

and especially on religious matters, Christian and Muslim youth leaders can still come together to discuss an issue of common concern". She further said that this could be an avenue for not only showing the leaders and the rest of the country that issues, no matter how sensitive they could be, can be dealt with through dialogue.

Speaking of frank engagement between Christian and Muslim youth in fighting the common enemy in the name of HIV/AIDS pandemic, my attention quickly turns back to the Ghanaian experience where, coupled with the sense of astute earnestness, the workshop moved the participants from what they had known to be the general format of interfaith interactions. They had, according to their knowledge hitherto to the PROCMURA workshop on HIV/AIDS, only known the process where they could be brought together in order to be converted into the other faith. In this case, they got deeply surprised to learn of PROCMURA's exceptional approach of promoting responsible witness and encouraging the art of constructive engagement between Christians and Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence towards a wholistic development in the society.

While responding to my question as to what degree do they think the work and sessions of youth workshops should cover in terms of Christian-Muslim engagement

in Africa, one of the participants in the Tanzanian gathering and another one during the Ghanaian workshop simply responded 'everything and anything that relates to the living situations of the adherents of the two Abrahamic faiths and entire humanity in general'. Series of challenges and questions emerge when looking at that response which include, 'how can we, in the midst of our religious diversity, express common convictions and explore core issues present in our religious traditions? How do we, as youth leaders in the continent and through our commitment as people of faith, translate, understand and appreciate the challenge of the other in his or her otherness in



The Ghana Christian-Muslim youth leaders at a group discussion with the Area Adviser, Rev. Dr. Nathan Samwini seated on the right

order to think and act human in our endeavours to finding solution to problems facing us today? In my opinion, and I am basing this argument on what the youth training workshops have so far brought out, our discussions and deliberations have been coined in such a way that they have always taken one issue at a time. This will then push the agenda of using our strength as members of one human race for the common purpose.

In looking at all these interactions, I overcame my initially-inherent fear when I was approached by the PROCMURA General Adviser to lend a hand in the formulation of the youth agenda given the fluidity of the relations between adherents of these two faith communities especially when it comes to youth participation.

The aroma of sincerity and honesty, as have been shown in these workshops, can only indicate one point, a confirmation that youth leaders in Africa, when provided with a common platform, will not only think and act in unity, but will also dedicate themselves to future harmonious work. It is upon this time that I am reminded of an old African adage that says: unless the lions have their historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter. This maxim, if paraphrased, may depict well the process of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), where after a deep thought of involving the youth in the general area of promoting good Christian-Muslim relations, implemented the youth programme. Subsequently,

(S continued on back page)



Women on issues of mutual concern and PROCMURA's experience, from page 13

our neighbour and this neighbour can be a person who does not share your faith," Pastor Angéle said. In addition, she referred to the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (Rom. 12:18) where he (Apostle Paul) puts emphasis on the second part of that command saying that 'as much as it depends on us, we should be at peace with

everybody'. "Here 'everybody' implies all humanity or God's creation and not only those who happen to belong to 'our' own religion or faith", she illustrated. As human beings, she went on to say, we are facing so many problems, which are overwhelming us that it is futile for us to add to that by creating new conflicts because of our religious differences. According

to her, there is a need to team up as one body and face the challenges of life together based on our humanness. However, she was quick to caution that this does not in anyway mean that people of different faiths such as Christians and Muslims should dissolve their respective religions and come up with one big religious community. "We should, while sticking to our faith, have collaborative effort on problem solving; live peacefully with one another and develop respectful attitude towards each other and their religious values while not compromising our faith for whatever reason it may be," she added. She explained that it is because of respective values that people come together to discuss and attend to issues as human beings.

In conclusion, Miss. Swaleh and Pastor Angéle commended the programme and said that it was only hoped that PROCMURA would open more channels where more people especially the women and youth will be able to interact cross-culturally and hence look and treat human life differently from what is being experienced today. They further appreciated the efforts of the two organisations – PROCMURA and Presbyterian Church of the United States (PC (USA) – for facilitating the programme, and to the latter, for their hospitality and warm welcome they experienced while attending the programme. "We do thank you all and especially those who were directly or indirectly involved in our travel and general itineraries," they said.



Christian-Muslim relations approach for comprehensive social development acknowledged at the Seventh World Social Forum

What do human rights lawyers from Europe, peace activists from Africa, and heterodox development economists from Latin America and Asia have in common with one another? The not so obvious answer to this is that all of these people were in attendance at the most recent World Social Forum (WSF), which took place at the Moi International Sports Centre in the outskirts of Kenya's capital city of Nairobi. The January 20 - 25, 2007 event, which was an excellent learning platform on global and local issues, became a historical occasion since, for the first time, the World Social Forum was taking place on the African soil. The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) had a chance to participate and make viable contributions to the Forum having been represented by Mr. Kirk Andrew Harris, an intern from the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America based at PROCMURA's Central Office in Nairobi.



Mr. Kirk Harris

According to him, from day one all through to the last event on the last day, issues of peace, human rights, and economic justice kept on propping up, especially in relation to the role of people of faith and faith-based organisations. In this case, PROCMURA, being in the field of addressing these continental issues from the Christian-Muslim relations point of view, cannot exonerate itself from the process as these are matters pertinent to its work.

The World Social Forum (WSF) brings together social movements, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and advocacy groups from

The World Social Forum (WSF) brings together social movements, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and advocacy groups from

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Christian-Muslim relations on the World Social Forum, from page 17

around the world for seminars, discussions, and debates surrounding the theme, "Another world is possible." This slogan, which has been the rallying cry of the WSF since it began in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001, embodies the core values and principles of the WSF movement, which describes itself as "non-confessional, non-governmental, and non-[political] party." The gathering was originally conceived as an alternative to the World Economic Forum, which takes place every January in the ski resort town of Davos, Switzerland; this high-power assembly of political leaders, corporate executives, and mainstream intellectuals discusses global political issues and economic growth. In contrast to this, the WSF views itself as movement led by representatives from the less economically-privileged countries of the "Global South" which seeks to generate discussion and raise awareness of social justice, international solidarity, gender equity, peace, and environmental preservation. It is in pursuit of these principles that the World Social Forum 2007 came to Nairobi.

PROCMURA's representative attended a number of stimulating workshops and sessions covering issues of interest to PROCMURA including a fascinating discussion on "Human Rights, Universality, and Culture," hosted by the Lutheran World Federation, A p r o d e v R i g h t s a n d Development Group, the Church of Sweden, and the NGO Equalinrights. As befits a

workshop of its title, the session investigated the quest for a universally held and practiced standard of human rights. Peter Prove, a human rights lawyer with the Lutheran World Federation, declared that the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" is virtually uncontested as a matter of international law, but is controversial on political and cultural levels, as governments and societies dispute the implementation of the principles, which the charter espouses. Peter Prove established that the root of these conflicts and debates lies in the question of human dignity. Therefore, according to Kirk Harris, while no culture disputes the fundamental dignity of the human person, the variety of how this worth is expressed across cultures creates a dilemma for the world community regarding just how universal the values are which form the basis for our modern understanding of human rights. He talks of variant examples that were floated by a number of speakers, most of which included issues that confront present day human rights advocates. One Muslim woman speaker from Mauritania described the degree to which religion becomes linked to cultural practices, which violate human rights. She explained that in her organization's campaign against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a cultural practice that has previously been justified on a religious basis, the Muslim Sheikhs in Mauritania who examined the *Qur'ân* found nothing at all to support the custom. "My organization's

engagement with the Sheikhs helped transform the role of religion to promote the right to health and went a long way in convincing members of some communities to halt the practice," she said. Addressing the same subject of the relationship between faith and rights, the coordinator and consultant of Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), Sheikh Saliou Mbacké explained that frequently, human rights principles become subverted when dictators use religion as a means to consolidate and justify their rule. Peter Prove, on the other hand, argued that it is necessary for human rights, which have been used as a political tool in the past, to become depoliticized in order to affirm their universality. He also noted that former UN Secretary General Koffi Annan was correct when he once said that while many government leaders for whom human rights were inconvenient would complain about their irrelevance, no complaints about the universality of human rights ever came from the people who were victims of human rights violations. This seminar on human rights was, based on Kirk's experience, not the only discussion that dealt with the role of faith in promoting human well-being. Caritas Internationalis, a worldwide Catholic relief and development organisation with branches in multiple countries and regions, organised an excellent forum on the role of faith-based NGOs engaged in peace-building projects. "In principle, all



Christian-Muslim relations on the World Social Forum, from page 18

religions value peace,” announced Zobel Behalal from the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS). In spite of this, Behalal pointed out that religion is sometimes used to justify war. He continued to say that in situations where religious beliefs have been manipulated to contribute to conflicts, it is paramount that organisations operating in these environments collectively create spaces for inter-religious dialogue that directly address the issues which fuel conflicts. A female representative of Caritas in Chad gave an example of such a space in which she stated that in that country, young Muslims and Christians are engaging one another for the first time because they both have a genuine desire to achieve peace and reconciliation in the face of a government which is trying to perpetuate a geographic and religious rift between “Muslim” northerners and “Christian” southerners in order to cling to power. The importance of this inter-religious engagement was stressed by a representative from Caritas Kosovo who declared that although the roots of conflict in Kosovo are political rather than religious, “if there is no religious peace, then there will be no peace.” In other words, Mr. Harris learnt that the actions of people of faith are essential for the resolution of conflicts in religiously pluralist societies. Mr. Behalal, who hails from Cameroon,

outlined several principles for engagement on the part of faith-based organisations. “Dialogue must focus on practical issues over theological differences, generate increased possibilities for people of different faiths to interact, create grassroots channels of communications that affirm human life, and undertake joint actions in which adherents of multiple faiths are involved in both the planning and execution of a project,” he noted. In addition, it was realised that it was only in such a way that communities of faith will manage to overcome the forces, which seek to divide them and denigrate the sanctity of human life. “This lesson is of great value for PROCMURA as it pursues peaceful relations with the Muslim community on the continent of Africa,” said Mr. Harris.

On the final day of workshops at the World Social Forum, reports Mr. Harris, a group of economists who reject conventional assumptions about development hosted a seminar where they aired a few of their theories. The organisation, known as International Development Economics Associates (IDEAs), primarily discussed the concept of “jobless growth.” Many developing countries across the world have experienced recent surges of economic

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A mourner carrying the photo of the late Sagara Badji during the burial

Obituary: The Cote d’Ivoire Area Committee official dies in his sleep during the meeting

The PROCMURA Cote d’Ivoire Area Committee lost one of its members on 24th November 2006. Mr. Sagara Badji, an evangelist of the United Methodist Church of Cote d’Ivoire, was one of the committed members of the Committee who tirelessly contributed to the growth of PROCMURA’s agenda in the country. At the time of his death, he was the deputy secretary of the Area Committee. Rev. Angèle Dogbe, the PROCMURA Women and Education Programme Coordinator was in Cote d’Ivoire at the time attending the Area Committee’s women’s seminar. She managed to attend the burial ceremony and gave a message of condolence on behalf of PROCMURA leadership. In her speech, she described Badji as one of those whose true commitment to the cause of peaceful living could not be questioned. Based on this, she said the Committee and PROCMURA in general will dearly miss his services.

From PROCMURA Central Office and entire leadership, we do join the family in prayers at this trying moment. May the Almighty God rest his soul in eternal peace. 🌍

Muslim Youth leader upbeat on PROCMURA's approach to Christian-Muslim relations strategy of collaboration

Youth need more space in interfaith relations, youth representatives say during the exchange programme

In response to the request made during the first exchange programme between the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) and the Egyptian's Cultural Division of Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS) which was held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2005 that youth be given a chance in

played pivotal role in the Coordination of Interfaith Youth Peace Initiative (IYPI) especially in relation to working with other interfaith structures in Africa, commented that besides being an opportunity of sharing ideas, the process also provided a challenge to see the potentials that lie within others. It was indeed very educational and with rich experience sharing and in actuality, a clear demonstration that the two organisations are committed to carry out requests made by the youth, he said. In reference to the role of youth in the quest of promoting harmonious relations between Christians and Muslims in Africa, the IYPI Co-coordinator was upbeat that young people in the continent yearn for these kinds of ventures, which could strengthen their positive perspectives on issues and enable them to change their attitudes for the better.



Musa Mwale (right) of IYPI and Okok-Obuoga of PROCMURA representing the youth interest during the PROCMURA-CEOSS Exchange programme which took place in Egypt

the next course of events, the two organisations ensured that this was not only done but they were also accorded an opportunity to further their agenda. Subsequent to this, Mr. Musa Mwale (a Muslim) from the Interfaith Youth Peace Initiative (IYPI) and Okok-Obuoga Bernard (a Christian), the PROCMURA Literature and Communications Officer who is also responsible for the organisational youth affairs, managed to travel and attended the gathering which took place in Alexandria with some excursions also taking place in Cairo.

Notably, one of the ways through which they made contributions was by co-presenting a paper on the role of the media in the whole set-up of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa

While giving his view on the whole question of exchange programme, Musa Mwale who has always

“In IYPI, we recommend that similar undertakings be replicated with specific and action-oriented formula since it is these kinds of sessions where we as young people can honestly bring our issues and concerns and collectively draw up an agenda of addressing them,” he said.

While addressing the issue of peace and peaceful living with emphasis on the PROCMURA approach, Mr. Mwale said that when exposed and trained on responsible way of talking about one's faith, the youth can be very instrumental in promoting the ideology of professing their own faith within an interfaith environment with love and mercy. He added that the energy of the youth in such programmes, where people of faith exchange ideas on what can be done to improve the relations, should be positively harnessed since the future of such activities and their subsequent outcome totally rely on the thoughts, actions and orientation of today's young people.



Turning his attention on the contemporary continental situation of ethno-religious division, he argued that the youth, just like other people in the world, today live in a set up which is

...involvement of young people in such programmes would further enhance their inability to understand and correctly interpret global issues within their own contexts...


extremely divided along sectarian lines such as cultural, economic, and political, and above all, the most worrying one, the religious line. "This is not surprising at all as these young people are born and grow up in an environment already full of ethno-cultural and religious stereotypes, prejudices, mistrust and extremism which are bound to make relations bad," he added. He went on to say that when people are nurtured by their communities to treat others, who are religiously and culturally different from them with caution, a line is drawn and this makes the relations be of 'us' against 'them'. The remedy to this situation is to provide practical forums where the young minds can be exposed to different experiences and values that would make them appreciate each other and respect their systems of beliefs, he suggested.

On his part, the Literature and Communications Officer of PROCMURA Mr. Okok-Obuoga elaborated the importance of such exchange programmes by saying that they enable people to see the other side of the world through the human face. He further said

that lack of opportunities such as these only make people think and act in a myopic way. "This would further enhance their inability to understand and correctly interpret global issues within their own contexts," said Mr. Okok who is also responsible for PROCMURA's youth programme.

The two youth leaders from Kenya while making their contributions across the plenary consenting that it is good to give higher priorities to young minds to participate in similar exchange programmes said that it is prudent to ensure that those who come along are not only open-minded but are people who are ready to listen and make constructive contributions. They both talked of the need for the two organisations to ensure not only structural follow-up to the youth participation but also putting into use their ideas.

In the area related to issues and challenges that the African youth, in particular, encounter and have to struggle with on an everyday basis, the two lamented that the gathering did not concisely have in its agenda time where they could be deliberated. They, on this basis, challenged the leadership of the two organisations to work together with the emerging youth groups, especially those that bear the face of interfaith process, so that youth-based issues are not left behind within the framework of building a culture of tolerance and harmonious coexistence in the continent. Mr. Musa Mwale on his part added that in future, it would be a good idea if when such forums are organised, young people are given an opportunity to deliberate and exchange ideas amongst themselves, the outcome of which can be part of the larger group discussion. Furthering his opinion on conducting continental youth exchange programme on matters of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa, the youth leader from Kenya suggested that time has come when the learning institutions got involved in promoting the students participation in matters of faith and social lives. "I see this as a starting point where alternative strategic measures which can ultimately enable the building of understanding across religious-cultural boundaries can begin," he said.

Whilst applauding the efforts of PROCMURA, the oldest continental body whose dedication is the promotion of understanding and harmonious peaceful living between the adherents of the two Abrahamic faiths, and the Egyptian based CEOSS through her Cultural Division, the two participants who have worked together on several interfaith programmes in Kenya opined that it is only through immense commitment to the vision of ensuring that people understand and appreciate each other that these sessions could be realised. In this case, they did not only salute the leadership of the organisations but also pledged their readiness to mobilise and resource for more youth who are ready to make emphatic contribution to the realisation of a peaceful Africa. 

Upcoming Events – Youth Workshops continue as Tanzania puts gear to more awareness on Christian-Muslim relations

Youth and Women Workshops in top gear in three West African countries as Tanzania prepares for more awareness creation and capacity building on Christian-Muslim relations

§ Women – Sierra Leone, Liberia and The Gambia

According to the PROCMURA Women's and Education Programme Coordinator, Rev. Angéle Dogbe, Christian and Muslim women from these three countries are expected to gather for one-day seminars in the three countries to deliberate on their stance in the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic amongst other issues.



Rev. Angéle Dogbe, Women's and Education and Education Coordinator

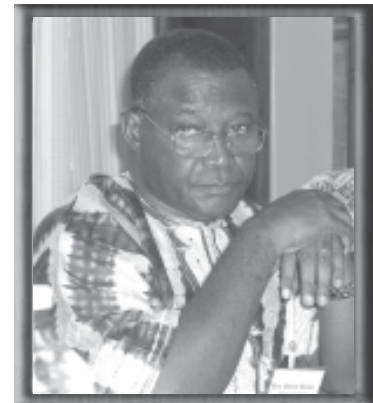
The Women's coordinator told the Communications Officer that plans are in top gear and that the dates are already set as Sierra Leone (21st March 2007), Liberia (26th March 2007), and the Gambia (29th March 2007). These workshops will be part of the implementation strategies of the Women's agenda, which was formulated at the regional level some years ago. Pastor Angéle is expected to join the Area Committees' leadership in these workshops.

§ Youth – Sierra Leone and Liberia

As part of its pursuit of enabling Christian and Muslim youth leaders define their plan in the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic by the use of religious teachings (Biblical and Qur'anic), the youth in Sierra Leone and Liberia will have their national training workshops in the month of March 2007. The outcome of these workshops, according to Mr. Okok-Obuoga Bernard, the PROCMURA Literature and Communications Officer who is also responsible for the Youth Programme, will be part of the West Africa Anglophone Christian-Muslim youth position on the fight against the pandemic. Accordingly, they will join the ideas, wants, and deliberations that came out of the Ghana and Nigeria workshops. The Area Committees in these countries are in no doubt that these gatherings, scheduled for 22nd and 23rd; and 27th and 28th



Rev. St. John York, Liberia Area Adviser in study



Rev. Moses Khanu, PROCMURA Area Adviser for Sierra Leone

March 2007 for Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively, will stimulate the interest of young people from both religions to work together in attending to common issues including the pandemic. These two countries have experienced immense civil wars including those that bore ethno-religious faces and the youth have been instrumentally used as executors. PROCMURA leadership looks forward to practical engagement of these youth leaders in building a community that can sway from being instruments of violence to agents of positive actions.

§ Tanzania – a chain of actions planned to spearhead good Christian-Muslim relation in the country


Information reaching PROCMURA Central Office from Rev. Canon Thomas Godda, the PROCMURA Area Adviser for Tanzania, indicates that out of the past sessions where Church leaders and youth have been



trained and exposed to matters of Christian-Muslim relations through PROCMURA's work, several activities are in the pipeline in the months of March and April 2007. He says that these activities will include training of youth on moral and interfaith relations with specific focus on



Rev. Canon Godda


what role they can play, workshop Islam lecturers at the Bible Colleges in Tanzania, and training on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations for Pastors and Evangelists. These proposed planned sessions are very important given that Tanzania is one of the countries within PROCMURA's working territories that are at the crux of fluid Christian-Muslim relations. 

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growth without witnessing a corresponding increase in the number of jobs available to displaced workers. In other words, the world has managed to produce a system that generates economic growth without creating "development" or reducing levels of poverty. This effect has been exacerbated by a rising inequality between income and capital; as worker productivity rises, worker wages remain relatively static. Another dilemma for the developing countries, according to this group, is the dependence on foreign capital and international resource transfers. All speakers at the session advocated for increased autonomy for developing countries in their macroeconomic policies, which could allow these nations to focus more on job creation and the formation of domestic industries. Consistent with this policy, the economists advocated for a consideration of social, ethical, and political concerns in the economic policies of both developed and developing nations.

In his endeavour to look at the whole question of the process, activities and the outcome of the seventh Forum, Mr. Harris noted that it is pretty hard to give a summary of the event in its entirety. "Its purpose is ambiguous and different organisations from a number of ideological and cultural backgrounds use it as a platform to espouse their views," he said while adding that the gathering was plagued by organisational difficulties as well as questions about its relevance and its transparency. Nonetheless, he went on to say, this time round, the event proved to be a beneficial session during which PROCMURA was able to expand its knowledge base and learn from other organisations that are doing work or carrying out programmes related to those of interfaith relations. He says that judging by the questions and enquiries that he had to contend with

from the delegates in regard to PROCMURA's agenda, it was apparent that people and various organisations, operating both in and outside the African continent, possess a great deal of interest in the organisation's unique approach to issues of Christian-Muslim relations. He says that a number of people he spoke to were fascinated by the idea of promoting constructive engagement between Christians and Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence for wholistic societal development. "This sphere in particular, and interfaith relations in general, was identified as central to a number of challenges facing the world today especially the relationship between faith and human rights," he said. He further added that in spite of complexity, PROCMURA need not shy off from taking a practical role in addressing the agenda of human rights as it deals with the very identity of what it means to a human person. He said this basing his argument on PROCMURA's long historical and profound experience in Christian-Muslim relations issues that has made it a key player in the continent and beyond.

From his report, Mr. Harris says that another lesson that became evident from the Forum is the involvement of religious factions in fanning conflicts including those that are violent ones, as they, together with their actions, turn out to be impediments to peace in the continent. "Being the oldest interfaith organisation in Africa and having working structures all over the continent coupled with expertise on issues of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations, PROCMURA has carved an exclusive niche to play a role to prevent these misunderstandings and conflicts." He concluded by saying that he hopes that the organisation draws and utilises, to the fullest, the challenges, and lessons arising from the 2007 WSF. 

New Team Leader appointed at the PROCMURA Central Office

After an intensive search taking several months of advertising, and re-advertising the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) finally managed to appoint a new Team Leader – Finance and Administration. Joy



Joy Wandabwa

Nabukwangwa Wandabwa, a young Kenyan lady, emerged as the top candidate from the two sets of interviews which were professionally and inclusively conducted at the Central Offices were conducted under the leadership and guidance by a panel of six financial experts and administrators drawn from CORAT Africa, the All Africa Conference of Churches, Frank Management and Consult, World Student Christian Federation (Africa Region), and the National Council of

Churches of Kenya. PROCMURA Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson as well as the General Adviser attended as observers.

Joy brings to PROCMURA fraternity, a wealthy experience in the area of leadership and management combined with astute academic credentials. An Anglican by Church denomination, she holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance option), and a Master of Commerce (Finance option) as well as Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Software Applications.

She is not new in the field of interfaith dialogue and more precisely the Christian-Muslim relations areas of work. Prior to joining PROCMURA, she worked for a period of six years with a local Kenyan, but regionally networked, faith-based organisation, Chemchemi Ya Ukweli (Well Spring of Truth), as the Finance Officer. The organisation has a programme that deals with the issues of inter-religious dialogue and through its approach of conflicts


impression on PROCMURA Christian-Muslim Youth and HIV/AIDS programme, from page 16

the joint Christian-Muslim youth programme of HIV/AIDS has since become an arena through which the youth, having and still being engaged in defining and spelling their own schema in relation to working together for the betterment of the society, can now live to tell their own anecdotes and hence following J. Rock's analogy of 'coming home and telling stories of profound relationships of collaboration'. These, it is my expectation and that of PROCMURA's leadership in general, will have positive undulation effect in the continent.



Mr. Okok-Obuoga, The PROCMURA Communications Officer

resolution called Active Non-Violence (ANV), Joy was exposed to a great degree of interfaith interactions; something she says has trained her to be tolerant and to see people of other faiths through a human eye. This, for PROCMURA, is expected to be strength since, on a daily basis; she will be coming into contact with the Muslims whom we work with in various programmes and activities.

It is with great joy that we do welcome Joy to the PROCMURA family as we pray to God to provide her and the entire PROCMURA team with strength, ability and vision as we strive to provide service in this complicated and yet obligatory field of building good relations between Christians and Muslims in the continent. 

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