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Interreligious Dialogue and the Multi-Religious Groups in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract:
A religion which is a set of beliefs is an important facet for many people who live in Nairobi. Religion helps in regulating behavior and most of the laws that have their basis in religious teaching. It has been the propagator of the ethical code and basic values which provide cohesion to society and integration to personality. Religious groups in Nairobi have played important roles in bringing people together and giving direction to people. However today, current occurrences have sparked some debate due to some tensions related to religion. The pluralistic living in Nairobi and the multi-faith groups have introduced diverse religious practices, which for some, appear strange and threatening – although others appear fascinating and enriching. Despite the fact that Nairobi has not been spared from religious related attacks, (eg bombing of US embassy in 1998 and Westgate in 2013), there are religions that yearn for peace and harmony. Bringing the spiritual dimension into the peace-making process through the interfaith discussions can create access to the more deep-seated, effective base of the parties' behavior, enabling them to examine critically their own attitudes, behaviors, and actions. People's conflict behavior is often based on more emotional considerations and thus may not be changed simply by rational negotiation processes and subsequent agreements. One of the ways in which this can be effectively done is through a serious interreligious dialogue. The goal of this dialogue is to bring about an understanding and respectful relationship among the parties involved. In the midst of so many challenges and confusion that has rocked Nairobi, all religious groups are tasked with the great responsibility of working together, to bring about a more stable Nairobi. The concerted effort and initiative of interreligious dialogue are essential.

Keywords: Religion, dialogue, conflicts, negotiation, ethics, diversity

1. Introduction

A religion which is a set of beliefs is an important part of life for many people. The biggest reason that society needs religion is to regulate behavior. Most of the laws that we follow today have their basis in religious teachings. Religion promotes the major social virtues like truth, honesty, non-violence, service, love, and discipline etc. It has been the propagator of basic values and ethical code which provide cohesion to society and integration to personality.

Religion for many plays important roles in bringing people together and giving direction to people. However today, there is a current occurrence that negates this stand. The fact that religious tension, persecution and an increasing number of bloody conflicts around the world where 'religion' is perceived to be contributory, brings up some debates. Our pluralist and multi-faith society brings us face to face with diverse religious practice, which to some appears strange and threatening - although to others can appear fascinating and enriching.

More than ever before, one can thus say that the world needs a continuous interreligious dialogue, on the international, national and local level. Interfaith dialogue has a hugely significant role to play in a diverse and multicultural, multi-faith society. Furthermore, it occupies a prominent, up-front position in corridors of power, buildings of faith and halls of learning.

This paper is in interreligious dialogue for peace and the researcher has limited herself Nairobi town in Kenya. Before talking about Nairobi, the study is preceded by background about Kenya.

1.1. Background Information

Nairobi is the capital of Kenya. Kenya on the whole, is predominately Christian, although Islam has had a strong presence along the coast and the area in and around Nairobi. A research done by Sawe (2017), on religion in Kenya resulted to the following: Christian 83% (Protestant 47.7%, Catholic 23.4%, other Christian 11.9%), Muslim 11.2%, Traditionalists 1.7%, other 1.6%, none 2.4%, unspecified 0.2%. Each of this religion is represented in Nairobi, and what has been witnessed in this city these days, is an influx of street preachers who in their own way are performers, commanding audiences, with a gospel that preaches tranquil salvation and fire and brimstone in the same breath.

The Constitution of Kenya, along with other laws of Kenya, prohibits the discrimination of people because of their religious beliefs and protects their religious freedoms. It gives people the freedom to worship, practice, observe, or teach any religion, as well as the freedom to debate and discuss in regard to religious questions and matters. So, to begin with, this law is bound to help some and on the other hand, encourage a competitive spirit among religions.

According to Merab (2015), Nairobi shares this multi-ethnic divide, and with the suburbs included, Nairobi has 6.54 million people. Nairobi of late has experienced an influx of people, who are in a dire search for employment and opportunities. This has been a source of richness and challenges as well. Sometimes the combination of marginalization, urbanization, poor governance, and weak police systems has contributed to the high incidence of crime and violence, especially in Nairobi. The six million people that live in Nairobi, have pushed many poor people in informal settlements. Violence is a chronic problem in Nairobi, it takes multiple forms and it has increased over the decades.

1.2. A Brief History of Interreligious Dialogue

Initiatives toward interreligious dialogue in a Western Christian context came as the culmination of a flow of cultural and ecclesiastical movements signified by certain landmark events. The history of modern interreligious dialogue as Sheets (2012) states cannot be told without reference to the first World's Parliament of Religions, held in conjunction with the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Here, for the first time, participants from diverse religious traditions gathered to interact and learn from one another. Further, the list of concerns about interreligious encounters and ongoing relationships that was delineated by participants in the Parliament set the stage for the work that continues even today.

According to Michaels (1958), Christian ecumenical movement was launched in Edinburg in the year 1910. Bishop Charles Brent from the Philippines initiated discussions and he later formed a movement known as a conferment of Faith and Order. This was disrupted by the First World War and according to Sasse (1929), meetings could not take place. The same author reports that after the end of the war the Catholics from America met the Orthodox Church in 1919 and the Roman Catholic Church Conference of the movement of faith and order was set for August 1927 and they met in Switzerland. Around 1948 when the world Churches met in Amsterdam, the Catholic Church under Pope Gregory XII (1932) and Pope Pius IX, showed some reluctance and simply used the word '*deliramentum*!'(madness). In 1936, the World Congress of Faiths (WCF) was formed in London. It is one of the oldest interfaith bodies in the world. One of its purposes was to bring "people of faith together to enrich their understandings of their own and others' traditions. In 1949, following the devastation of World War II, the Fellowship in Prayerwas founded by Carl Allison Evans and Kathryn Brown. Evans believed that unified prayer would bridge theological or structural religious differences. He hoped that this would open the mind and heart to a new understanding of and appreciation for the beliefs and values of those following different spiritual paths. In 1952, Michael (1958), says that the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) was founded in Amsterdam and in 1958, the Centre for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) at Harvard Divinity School (HDS) began. In 1965, "about 100 Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergy" formed Clergy Concerned about Vietnam (CCAV). Its purpose was "to challenge U.S. policy on Vietnam.

In 1965, during the second Vatican Council, it was decided that relations with all religions should be developed. To do this, Pope Paul VI established a special secretariat (later a pontifical council) for relationships with non-Christians. The papal encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* of Pope Paul VI, of 1964, according to Guixot (2013), emphasized the importance of positive encounter between Christians and people of other faith traditions. These developments gave birth to a second Vatican Council initiated under Pope John the XXIII and a document called *Nostra Aetate* on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions was among the documents (Walter Abbot, 1967). Although Axel Marc (2017), in his critical reflection notes that the document was meant for Catholics as a positive move towards an infective religious dialogue.

In 1967, the World Council of Churches (WCC) conference proved to be a landmark both as the beginning of serious interest in interfaith dialogue as such, is regarded by many as the first involvement in the ecumenical discussion of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians.

On October 27, 1986, Pope John Paul II had a day of prayer at Assisi and invited about fifty Christians and fifty leaders of other faiths. In fact, many can say that inter-religious dialogue on a large scale and in practice started after this World Day of Prayer for Peace to which Pope John Paul II invited the representatives of the world religions to pray for peace in Assisi.

After this historic event in Assisi, Mizzi (2006) says that people started to talk about *''inter-religious dialogue''* and to, actually, have dialogue. In Assisi, the concept of interreligious dialogue came out into the light. It was not simply confined to a document any longer but it became a practice. After the meeting in Assisi inter-religious dialogue spread like wildfire all over the world. Many inter-religious talks and conferences were organized, and still are, in different parts of the world. The motive behind these meetings is to create a new spirit between the religions of the world, to bring the different religious leaders to talk to each other and to collaborate with each other in order to find new solutions to conflicts, to world poverty and injustice, to the safeguard of creation, to eliminate violence against women and children and to encourage respect and love towards each other in the human family.

1.2.1. Interreligious Dialogue: Definition

Interreligious dialogue also referred to as interfaith dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to the cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, (i.e. "faiths") at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice their faith freely. Interfaith dialogue is not just

words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels (Paul VI, 1964).

These dialogues continued and in the 21st century, (9/11) event, many religious took initiatives. In 2007 when Al Qaeda attacked America, Islam began to join the interreligious dialogue in a massive way.

1.2.2. The Aims of Interreligious Dialogue

As Reuel (1963) notes, the dialogue is both relationships between persons and the principle that determines the nature of their communication. He continues to say that dialogue seeks to:

    i. increase mutual understanding and good relations within our multicultural and multi-faith society.

    ii. identify causes of tension in Christian-Muslim relations. These are often economic, social or political rather than religious.

    iii. build understanding and confidence to overcome or prevent tensions.

    iv. break down the barriers and stereotypes which lead to distrust, suspicion, and bigotry.

    v. promote solidarity among all people, and action for social justice, defense of moral values and peace and liberty in our world today.

The world has become a global village and creating an atmosphere of interdependence between different people and religions are important. People of different religions live side by side as a part of the global community sharing their worries, successes, and challenges of poverty, hunger, threats of diseases such as HIV/AIDS pandemic, environment vagaries, and terrorism. Many cities of the world have become a home for many, and a good example is the city of Nairobi. Under these circumstances, more than ever before, there is a need for different religious communities, to cultivate a culture of interreligious understanding, friendship and cooperation as they strive to live together in harmony.

This dialogue must be a continuous process because those make laws may not consider some aspects that threaten a peaceful living. At times, for instance, the Muslims have voiced their grievances because they felt that the government was discrimination them and interfering with their democratic spaces. This was seen in 1992 when the government introduced the multi-party system, the Muslims went ahead and formed their own party called the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK). The government did not register it and some activists incited mass demonstrations which resulted in violent attacks. Some of these reasons may block and effective interreligious dialogue.

1.2.3. The Rationale for Interreligious Dialogue

While interreligious dialogue is very important in a multi-ethnic setting; it is good to clarify what it is not. Interreligious dialogue is not an attempt to work towards a new homogeneous world religion. There is no thought of trying to amalgamate the world's religions into a new super-religion. Nor again does it try to find the lowest common denominator among religions.

Associated with the above, there is another unworthy reason which is: careerism. Interreligious dialogue should not spring from a personal or career motive. The opinion that it is good for one's career and promotional chances to be seen to be promoting interreligious dialogue as it is the political flavor is wrong.

The reasons that should motivate people to engage in this dialogue are either pragmatic or theological. The two are often closely related to each other, and the main aim is to seek the truth and understanding obtained through a friendly conversation. Spirituality is at the center and it is the most powerful feature because it allows a change in participants' attitude. Sachidanada (2002) noted that interreligious dialogue if it is to lead to a culture of peace in any society, it needs to have a firm spiritual foundation wherein the uniqueness of every religious tradition is respected and upheld. The five principals he comes up with are, rootedness in truth, openness, simplicity, prayerfulness, and non-violence.

In Buber's vision, the dialogue is not just a set of 'techniques', but a way of being with 'others'. When we fail to acknowledge the complexity of other people, we treat them as if they were objects to be manipulated, removed or altered (Burber, 1958). Seeing the good in others enhances closeness and interest to learn from others.

The understanding of the aims and the rationale of interreligious dialogue is important especially in a setting like Nairobi, where multi-ethnic uprisings are likely to occur. Presently, one cannot deny that the relations between Christians and Muslims have invariably tended to concentrate on the obvious and common narratives of suspicions, hatred, and conflicts between the two faith communities. This ranges from Muslim state relations, spatial competition engendered by such mundane issues as education and political representation; constitutional debates and public preaching, to Islamophobia, and religious radicalism and extremism. In addition, the global war on terror against radical and extremist groups that are associated with Islam and Muslims such as Al-Qaida and Al-Shabab poses the greatest challenge not only to Christian –Muslim tolerance and co-Existence in Kenya but also an interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims. If for instance one looks at what happened in the Westgate Mall terrorist attack Ayman (2015) noted that members of the Somali community had to bear all sorts of harassment and discrimination such as insults, and being forcibly removed from public service vehicles.

2. Interreligious Dialogue in Kenya

From the above moves by countries from the west to encourage dialogue, Kenya is one of the countries that have tried to promote dialogue among religions. Kenya is replete with numerous attempts to foster interreligious dialogue.

Without a doubt, religious actors have played many important roles with religious leaders who have been active across many sectors of Kenya's, politics, development, and economy. The tangible legacy of religiously owned educational and health institutions mirrors the historical evolution of churches and communities. The central roles of religious institutions in the progressive development of schools and health facilities in many places have helped shape individual and community identities

Interreligious Councils in Kenya are the mechanism through which religious leaders engage their communities in multi-religious cooperation to transform conflict, promote peace and advance sustainable development. Each Interreligious Council thus honors the ways in which different religious communities in its area are organized and represent themselves. Most of these councils have their headquarters in Nairobi. Some of these councils are explained below.

2.1. The National Council of Churches of Kenya

According to Henry (2013), the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), whose headquarters are in Nairobi was founded in 1913. The NCCK has twenty-seven member churches and seventeen Christian organizations, who work collaboratively towards the holistic NCCK. It includes different Christian denominations namely; Presbyterian, Lutheran, Pentecostals, Salvation Army, Coptic Orthodox, Gospel, Anglican, and African Christian, among many others. In Nairobi, this council is known to promote unity, fellowship, and dialogue among its members and works through their networks to manage programs that meet emerging community needs. It supports capacity building and governance and social services, with a focus on areas like refugee services, family and community health, education, environment, economic empowerment, and peace building.

2.2. Inter-Religious Council of Kenya

Poor governance and, more specifically, corruption are long-standing concerns for Kenya, and they are widely understood to present major obstacles to virtually all development efforts. Dafe (2009), in her analysis, notes that poverty, lack of finance and management failures are endogenous outcomes of political decisions. Apart from the dialogue, the interfaith organizations in Nairobi have to address these issues, which seem to be the source of conflict in the city and in the country as a whole. In connection with this concern Njuguna (2014), reports that the Catholic Bishops Conference spoke out in June 2014, linking ethnic tensions to "inherent corruption and poor governance''.

The Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) is one of this interfaith coalition which is a coalition of all faith communities, which work together to deepen the interfaith dialogue and collaboration for common action. The IRCK was legally registered as a society in 1983 and its main purpose was to promote interfaith fellowship, interreligious dialogue and shared values for a peaceful and just society and Kenya in Particular.

In 2004, the organization changed its name from World Conference on Religions for Peace Kenya (WCRP-Kenya) to IRCK. This was done to reflect and address the unique nature of the religious organizations in Kenya and delineate herself from the narrow thematic mandate associated with the name WCRP.

According to Henry (2017, 47), the IRCK brings together several religious bodies and organizations such as the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK), Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC-Kenya), Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), National Muslim Leaders Forum (NAMLEF), Shia Ithnashari Muslim Association (SHIA), and the Hindu Council of Kenya (HCK). Although the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC), mainly work on the Kenyan Coast, they also have operated in Nairobi. This is a non-profit faith-based organization that works with clerics, religious leaders, and faith communities from diverse faiths to promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence, good governance, and democracy, environmental management and conservation through interfaith dialogues. It is comprised of eight religious institutions namely, the Roman Catholic Church, Council of Imams and Preachers in Kenya, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, National Council of Churches of Kenya, Evangelical Alliance of Kenya Organization of African Instituted Churches, Hindu Council of Kenya and the African Traditionalists. This group has been in the forefront in advocating for peace and have long shown a unique willingness and capacity to bring together rival groups in the search for common ground. They do this by calling for reconciliation, dialogue, and cultural sensitivity to build social cohesion.

A notable move that was taken by Moi's June 1999 as Mwathi (2012), reports, establishes the involvement of religious leader by the government to take part in the long-awaited constitutional review process. It was, however, to be undertaken solely by Parliament but civil society and political groups protested. It was after this that religious leaders then established their own review process called the Ufungamano Initiative, named after a building jointly owned by NCCK and the Kenya Episcopal Conference where the group met. Ufungamano ultimately came to encompass 54 different human rights organizations, religious groups, women's rights organizations, youth groups, and opposition parties that represented various conflicting interests. The movement sought to create a wider base of consultation with civil society, stressing openness, transparency, inclusivity, accessibility, and accountability as key principles of the constitutional review process.

Higher institutes of learning are also encouraged by these interfaith groups to introduce subjects that promote religious understanding and tolerance. As a result, St. Pauls' University, has gone a notch higher from the academic discourse and established a Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Eastleigh (CCMRE).This is a welcome note, towards the building of a more tolerant community given that Nairobi is the headquarters of the interfaith interventions that operate in the country.

The Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK) According to Henry (2017), was founded in 1975, serves as the coordinating body for the evangelical churches of Kenya. It organizes training, workshops, engage different interfaith groups in dialogue and facilitates active participation in improving Kenya's spiritual, social, and physical welfare. Its mission is to empower the evangelicals to bring God's transforming grace to the people of Kenya through a united prophetic voice and holistic ministries, which they aim to accomplish through active partnership and coordination with various ministries in the Kenyan government. Through this collaboration, they help communities in conflict management and peaceful leaving.

2.3. Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), which was formerly known as Kenya Episcopal Conference the (KEC), is the umbrella organization of the Catholic Church in Kenya. KCCB is a body which is composed of all bishops in Kenya. According to a letter released by the KEC (2005), statutes of the KEC were approved by the Holy See on December 7, 1976, as KEC, and they were revised and ratified by the Holy See on 24th July 2012 and named the KCCB. KCCB is the highest authority of the plenary session, attended by all the bishops and the organization has a General Secretariat that accomplishes the Assembly's mission and communication. The KCCB is a member of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). For organization purposes, and easy facilitation, the body has forms committees and commissions, that oversee the effective operations in different apostolates of the entire Church. One of this commission is that of interreligious dialogue, of which this paper is concerned about.

The adaptation of this move is not originally from the Kenyan bishops. According to the KEC (2005), the protest and Churches that began the ecumenical movement in the late 1800's, which resulted in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Catholics were not direct participants in these movements. However Pope John XXII, later on, took steps towards this direction and process for a Vatican Council begun, and this where the origin of promoting Christian unity and this idea spread to all the Catholic Churches. In 1966, after the council had ended, Pope Paul VI approved directives which were to guide ecumenical actions in different countries and this saw the formation of the local and national ecumenical commissions. The directives were addressed to the episcopal conference and the KCCB responded by forming the commission for interreligious dialogue. The main objective of this commission was to promote mutual collaboration, respect, and understanding between the Catholics and other followers of other religious traditions. People who worked in this committee had to go through a period of formation and study of other religions.

As far as religious dialogue is concerned the bishops have played a major role in advocating for peaceful co-existence among the different religious groups found in Kenya. Apart from this, they focus on issues ranging from refugee welfare, AIDS relief, social communications, health, and justice and peace to education and religious education and family life.

Peaceful coexistence among groups of people and religion has been one of the goals for interreligious dialogue. Kenya has experienced clashes and hostilities originating from political incitement and inequality in sharing the national resources. Bishop Korir in his script (2009), says that the violence that Kenya witnessed in 1992 & 1994.was politically instigated: many were killed, injured and displaced. He says that all these have resulted to trauma, divisions and stalled economic development. He urges everyone to promote and work towards an effective peaceful co-existence. He continues to say that 'while violence has plagued Kenya's elections since 1992, the level of the destruction following 2007 was unprecedented' (p. 7). The KCCB hence has been participating with other religions, so that the major problems that affect Kenya can be addressed. All these problems which include, corruption, poverty, crime, violence, disease, and immorality are at the heart of the religious councils and Nairobi county is one of the areas that is affected by all the above ills.

3. The Role of Religion in Nairobi

As we have seen above, different people from different ethnic affiliations live in Nairobi. So Nairobi a multicultural city, with diverse cultures and religious beliefs. Different religions have played key roles in peacemaking interventions in Nairobi and elsewhere. The fact that the religious leaders are trusted, people see that the unique leverage for promoting reconciliation they possess, among conflicting parties and the ability to re-humanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of time.

Nairobi is a beautiful town but it has had its fair share of suffering. Despite the challenges and the wounds caused by the massive killings (eg bombing of US embassy and Westgate), there are religions that yearn for peace and harmony. Bringing the spiritual dimension into the peace-making process through the interfaith discussions can create access to the more deep-seated, effective base of the parties' behavior, enabling them to examine critically their own attitudes and actions. People's conflict behavior is often based on more emotional considerations and thus may not be changed simply by rational negotiation processes and subsequent agreements. One of the ways in which this can be effectively done is through a serious interreligious dialogue. The goal of this dialogue is to bring about an understanding and respectful relationship among the parties involved.

Even if religion is not the actual determining factor in life today, it paradoxically appears to be an important part of life when conflicts arise. Many conflicts arise on the way to the attainment of power and might. In addition to this, the concerns raised by Nathan (2006) are considered important. He says that the pace of globalization increases, the world's religions find themselves in a perilous dilemma that they have yet to resolve in either practical or conceptual term. On the one hand, the globalization of markets exerts a powerful pressure toward consumerism and materialist values, which undermine and undercut religious perspectives and sensibilities. On the other hand, the globalization of war heightens the intensity of these religious perspectives and sensibilities and distorts them in the direction of violence and religious extremism.

But despite the above concerns, the efforts of religious leaders to initiate peace processes cannot be undermined. The study would like to establish that religion is a powerful constituent of cultural norms and values, because it addresses the most profound existential issues of human life (e.g., freedom and inevitability, fear and faith, security and insecurity, right and wrong, and sacred and profane), religion is deeply implicated in individual and social conceptions of peace. This has been evident in the movements of ecumenical meetings and interreligious meeting that are aimed at resolving conflicts and differences.

Nairobi town thus, which is a business center connecting many parts of the world, is affected by the above, and the coexisting of different religious and ethnic divides is a challenge. Religious leaders are thus called upon to work together so that others working in this town can use this as a learning experience.

3.1. Forms of Interreligious Dialogue
Sheets (2012) establishes that the power of religion can be used as a major force of unification among divergent factions, and hence it can play a key role in the promotion of global peace and reconciliation, by bringing varying groups together in order to establish and maintain constructive channels of communication and sustainable collaboration. Based on the objectives set by the facilitators, inter-religious dialogue can take different forms.
   i.   Cognitive dialogues are centered on exchange of information and aim to provide a learning opportunity about the faith of the "other."
   ii. Affective dialogues focus on building relationships and concentrate on sharing stories, experiences, feelings, and thoughts.
   iii. Collaborative Dialogues emphasize working together to address common concerns (Abu Nimer et al. 2007: 16), such as HIV/AIDS, water sanitation, or climate change. Educational initiatives or training programs that aim to break down stereotypes through lectures, panels, and sermons at religious sites can also be considered inter-religious dialogue.

3.2. Levels of Inter-religious Dialogue
Inter-religious dialogue can take place at different levels. These include high, mid, and grassroots levels. Each of these levels has their own strengths and limitations.
   ➢   High-level inter-religious dialogue: Inter-religious dialogue can take place at the high leadership level, which involves religious authorities such as the Pope, the Dalai Lama, or the Chief Rabbi. As Garfinkel (2004: 2) indicates, various high-level inter-religious dialogues have taken place over the last decades to speak collectively as advocates of peace, including the Alexandria Dialogue, which led to the Alexandria Declaration. High-level religious leaders have a significant degree of authority, legitimacy, and credibility so that their actions can send a strong message. However, these leaders often lack the necessary time to commit themselves to long-term inter-religious dialogues. In addition, their involvement tends to attract a lot of media attention, which can undermine initial dialogue efforts. Also, due to their social location as communal representatives, they may be hindered from talking openly and sincerely
   ➢   Mid-level inter-religious dialogue: This includes, meetings between religious leaders; pilgrimages to one another's religious sites; meetings between religious practitioners, such as monastics, regarding contemplative life; seminars and dialogues between scholars (Mack 1997). Mid-level leaders include clergy as well as scholars, professionals, business people, and artists, among others. Although they are not as visible as the high-level leadership, they have access to both high- and grassroots levels. As such, they can influence both the grass-roots level and connect with high-level religious and political leadership. They also have relatively more time and resources to devote to inter-religious dialogue. For these reasons, middle-range leaders are often the best candidates for inter-religious dialogue.
   ➢   Grass-root Inter-religious Dialogue: The conflict transformation theory argues that in order to build sustainable peace, it is necessary to build relations first at the grassroots level. Inter-religious dialogue at a grassroots level includes cross-community dialogues to foster reconciliation. Participants of these dialogues, including youth groups, women's organizations, and other local organizations, come together across religious divisions to promote cross-community interaction and to develop participants into agents of reconciliation. Although building constructive relations at this level does not guarantee the resolution of conflict, it may contribute to healing and repairing of relationships, especially during the post-conflict reconstruction phase.

4. The Effects of the Recent Attacks in Nairobi
Terrorism has led to a rising anti-Islamic rhetoric among Christians and "raised the tempo for the hostile climate towards Muslims" in Kenya as (Ayman 2015) notes. Consequently, the fault lines between Christians and Muslims have widened (Kagwanja 2014).Arguments by Muslims that "terrorists are not Muslims" or "terrorism is the work of the devil" have done little to absolve Muslims and Islam from blame as the attacks are committed by members who allegedly bear Muslim names and invoke the name of Allah. This has brought an unfair blanket condemnation of Islam and Muslims in Kenya as many Christians do not distinguish the acts of an individual Muslim from those of the community and religion.
After the 2013 Westgate Mall terrorist attack, Christian and Muslim leaders in Mombasa issued a joint statement denouncing Al-Shabaab's ideology and tactics as heretical teachings not based on Islam or Christianity. They denounced the Islamist group, saying the wanton killing of civilians cannot be justified under Islam or any other religion (The East African, 8 September 2012). The leaders, who represented the Council of Islamic Preachers of Kenya (CIPK), SUPKEM and Kenya National Inter-religious Network, spoke on 22 September 2013, a day after the Westgate Attack (Maina, 2014).This act of condemnation from both Christian and Muslim leadership eased the rising tensions between Christians and Muslims.

4.1. Challenges of Interreligious Dialogue
According to Mojzes (2002), religious resources are contained in the four main elements of which religions consist. These elements are religious ideas (content of belief), religious practices (ritual behavior), social organization (religious community), and religious--or spiritual--experiences. These dimensions can all be used in the service of peacemaking. Two critical elements in religious life that are centrally important to peacemaking are empathy and compassion, and the value of tapping into these attributes is readily apparent ineffective religious peacemaking. Besides, it important to mention some of the challenges that can emerge in interreligious dialogue:
Most of the interreligious movements are started because of extrinsic motivations on which religious solidarity is sought. It is frequently external factors, for example, the need to fight crime and deadly conflict or to do damage control after provocative attacks, that provide the impetus for interreligious cooperation. The upsurge and proliferation of interreligious activities in the wake of

September 11, 2001, attacks on America falls squarely within this category. Now, these extrinsic motivations may be helpful in getting an interreligious dialogue started, but they are insufficient to sustain the movement in the longer term. In order for the interreligious movement to become self-propelling and sustainable, it needs to find intrinsic reasons from within faith commitments for promoting good relations with people of other religions.

The sporadic killings that stem from terrorism and extremism are also challenging for our world today. Hamideh, (2004) calls it the misuse and the abuse of religion. Mass killings in multi-cultural societies in the name of religion creates divisions and hatred.

Another challenge facing the interreligious movement is the question of language in both its literal and symbolic forms. The interreligious encounter is not only biased by the language within which it occurs but also conditioned by a powerful symbolic language, namely the predominant categories of thought within which it occurs.

The top-down and the bottom-up approaches are not applied. Often, interreligious dialogue takes place at the level of the top leadership. The challenge for inter-religious activists continues to be how to bring the proverbial grassroots along in this inter-religious culture. There is a real risk that the wonderful benefits that accrue from interreligious dialogue may not filter down to the rank and file. This is a strategy which was used by early missionaries and history tells us that it was not quite effective. Swidler (2000), supports this when he says that, interreligious dialogue contributes to peace building. However, it is only significant if it is not only executed by religious leaders, scholars at conferences, religious leaders' forums, and workshops, but also involves lay people at the grass root level.

Dialogue work thus sometimes falls prey to elitism --engaging scholars, secular-influenced liberals, leaders, and the wealthy more than their counterparts: non-academics, religious conservatives, laypersons, and the poor. An example of elitism is when dialogue participants, organization host staff, residential host families, or event presenters are over-selected or even selected only from an identifiable privileged class. Admittedly, organizers contend that underrepresented groups often declined invitations to participate for various reasons including travel costs, suspicions about the endeavor, and concerns about public perception. This occurrence complicates, without negating, the critique regarding elitism.

Another challenge is a rather ironic one. While Swidler (2000) and others are clear that true dialogue precludes proselytization (that is, seeking to convert the other to one's own perspective), critics have suggested that there is an implicit proselytization at work in this model. Advocates for interreligious dialogue are sometimes viewed as actively promoting their own perspective, that of secular values --that is, liberal, pluralistic religious values as opposed to conservative, exclusivist religious values. Thus, for example, Western-conceived dialogue offers itself (its perspectives, values, and methods) as a solution to the world's religious conflicts and, in so doing, creates secular criteria for what constitutes valid religious identity and conduct. A religious tradition is understood as being validated by both its perceived contribution to human well-being and its engagement in critical thinking.

The other point of concern is that of religious ignorance. Lack of knowledge of other religions is a big limitation. Accusations in public rallies show ignorance and the inappropriate use of the media and language can result in religious uprisings and violence. This is mostly depicted in the thought of superiority complex which leads to hate speech, discrimination and negative reactions from others religions.

Anita in her analysis (1954) says that Prejudices cannot be undermined through discussion or even prayer, but by working on our emotional reactions. Many challenges that are faced by both scholar-practitioners and religious leaders, make inter-religious dialogue an extremely difficult endeavor. First of all, it is not easy to convince religious leaders to commit to a dialogue process. During times of conflict, mutual distrust makes any interaction with the "other" suspicious. Providing security to participants and their families, especially after the process, is sometimes quite difficult for interreligious dialogue organizers.

There are also other challenges connected with competing interpretations which need skillful management. If there are members for instance, who hold extremist interpretations, listening to others becomes an uphill task. The other challenge is connected to the gender disparity because, in most religious traditions, official religious leadership consists mainly of men. Quite often, women are excluded from religious education, or cannot be ordained officially. This total exclusion of women can block interreligious dialogue, especially when it comes to the implementation phase. As Noddings, (1993) observes, feminists have contributed to the expansion of peaceful approaches to education and has pointed out the incredible cost of war upon women and the ongoing aspects of gender violence that predominate in most societies. The psychological damage that has been caused by male domination in patriarchal societies creates animosity that reverberates through the social order in many destructive ways.

Finally, all religions must be aware of the tasks ahead and to be clear on the conversational goals is an added advantage. If the goal, for instance, is to discuss complex theological and doctrinal issues, it is necessary to include scripture experts, historians, linguists, and other academicians. Whoever has lived in Nairobi will know what this situation results too. The self-proclaimed bishops who just get out of the blue and appoint themselves, have caused damage to innocents Nairobians. For one to lead any religion today, a formative period and study of its doctrines are paramount. Lack of adequate knowledge according to Gort (1989), is a threat to the religious values and the concept of dialogue requires constant careful analysis. Due to this ignorance, there also do not who separate political, economic, social and cultural beliefs and practices from their religious traditions.

Speaking about African and other parts of the world the problem of Westernization or the imposition of Western norms is seen as a problem. When religion is viewed with a foreign perspective, the receivers become suspicious and develop resistance. This is clear if the area has been experiencing conflicts and competition for resources.

5. Recommendations for an Effective Interreligious Dialogue

The process of peace building is complex and multidimensional. This is particularly so in contexts of conflict, for which three interconnected phases of peacebuilding have been identified: conflict prevention and de-escalation, crisis management and cessation of hostilities, and consolidation leading to a stable peaceful order.

The way of overcoming prejudice and discrimination might include:

- Education: Education is the most powerful weapon at any kind of situation. Prejudice (literally 'pre-judging') is often based on ignorance. Education removes the ignorance and thus removes the prejudice.
- Experience: This relates to the previous point. The best way to remove stereotypes is through personal experience of people from different cultures and different ethnic groups.
- Positive role models: People in the public eye (sports stars, music stars, actors, politicians etc) can counteract negative stereotypes and prejudices.
- Dialogue and cooperation: Encouraging people to meet with and share experiences with people of different backgrounds can help form friendships, people would gain a better understanding of traditions and customs and would, as a result, be less prejudiced and less likely to discriminate.
- Laws and sanctions: Discrimination can be made illegal and those who behave in a prejudiced or discriminatory way can be punished. However, this does not necessarily help change attitudes!
- The lead concern is how religious communities can work together in a shared public space, ensuring equal citizenship rights to people of every religious tradition, in the midst of numerous asymmetries and power struggles.

6. Conclusion

Nairobi's dynamic and ubiquitous religious groups and institutions play vital roles in many facets of national development. They help shape national identity, public policy, and private behavior. The contribution that religious groups have offered to Nairobi are enormous.

The pluralistic groups that live in Nairobi, gives one a reason to believe that initiatives for interreligious dialogue should never be blocked. At the heart of any interreligious dialogue is an effort to build lasting trust and the deepening of communication across conflict lines.

The current situation of Nairobi is not as good as people would wish it to be. Internal and external stressors contribute to Nairobi's current fragility. The presence of religious tensions, caused by extremists the massive killings of innocent people possess a big threat to a peaceful coexistence among faith groups.

Religious leaders are thus called to skilfully identify the social and religious problems affecting the people and come up with a transformative action plan that starts right from the grass root levels. To have an effective religious dialogue, a concerted effort is paramount, so that people can move together. The Church councils that are entrusted with responsibility, should do so with sober mind skill.

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