Building Capacity for Interreligious Community Action

FINAL EVALUATION OF CIRCA PROJECT

October 2017

CRS
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES®

The views expressed in this report are those of project participants and the author and may not necessarily represent the official views of GHR or CRS.

Acronyms

AIP	Advancing Interreligious Peacebuilding
AOSK	Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya
BAKWATA	The National Muslim Council of Tanzania
CICC	Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics
CIRCA	Capacity for Interreligious Community Action
CP	Connector project
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EQ	Evaluation question
FBO	Faith-based organization
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria
GHR	GHR Foundation
IR	Interreligious
IRA	Interreligious action
IRC	Interreligious council
IRD	Interreligious dialogue
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NDP	Nile Dialogue Platform
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
SO	Strategic objective
TOR	Terms of reference
UJCC	Uganda Joint Christian Council

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Executive Summary

The Capacity for Interreligious Community Action program[1] (CIRCA) was a three-year capacity-building program financed by GHR Foundation and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The overarching goal of the program was to contribute to human development and more peaceful coexistence among designated local Muslim and Christian communities in Egypt, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The program operated in environments with numerous drivers of conflict. These included:

- Discrimination and marginalization
- Loss of recognition, access, and power
- Isolation from the other faiths
- Ignorance and fear
- Deteriorating influence of the state
- Impunity
- Political instrumentalization of religion
- Violent extremism

The program sought to strengthen the capacity of: a) individuals through deeper knowledge, more positive attitudes, and enhanced practical skills, and b) organizations, through growing engagements, networking, and effective cooperation with others. The program operated at local levels, although a few of the partners are national-level actors.

The proposal includes two strategic objectives:

Strategic objective 1: Partners effectively support Muslim and Christian leaders, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities.

Strategic objective 2: Partner organizations more effectively engaged in interreligious development and peace initiatives.

CRS has developed the following theory of change for CIRCA: "If key CRS and partner staff develop more positive attitudes, improve knowledge and skills for Muslim-Christian cooperation, and have opportunities to develop and implement joint Muslim-Christian projects focused on the common good, then they will contribute to human development and peaceful coexistence through interfaith networks and practical action."

Broadly, the program activities fall into two categories implemented consecutively: training and practice. The first two years were devoted to an extensive eight-module training program for Christian and Muslim leaders and staff of faith-based NGOs. They, in turn, applied their newly enhanced knowledge and skills in interreligious actions in support of local Muslim, Christian, and community leaders, including youth and women, who worked together on practical local projects of shared interest,

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[1] CIRCA is referred to here as a program in order to distinguish it from the connector projects.

known as connector projects. As a result, the program envisioned partner organizations engaging more effectively in interreligious development and peace initiatives at an organizational level.

Connector project (CP) participants varied in terms of age, gender, and religion. The CPs cut across several sectors including potable water, natural resource management, income generation, and environmental sanitation. They also varied, even within the same country, in their proximity to violence.

A total of 118 participants went through the CIRCA training: 45 Muslims, 71 Christians, and 2 Traditionalists. Twelve connector projects were launched involving 18 partner organizations dispersed over six countries.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the merit and significance of the project and to glean lessons about the processes and enabling/constraining factors for strengthening interreligious cooperation and social cohesion. The bulk of the evaluation questions are qualitative in nature and focus on effectiveness and learning.

The evaluation questions (EQs) and boundaries were negotiated, settling on three countries to be visited and eight evaluation questions. The countries chosen—Kenya, Niger, and Nigeria—were considered to be information-rich. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, document review, observation, workshops, and a mini-survey of CIRCA trainees. Interviewers included the external evaluator and the program manager. Internal reflections were conducted in Egypt, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Findings Relating to Effectiveness

EQ 1: To what extent have partners effectively supported Muslim and Christian leaders, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities?

> *Finding 1*: Across the four connector projects visited, there was a wide range of types of support. CIRCA trainees identified more pastoral roles, while CP participants had a more practical, nuts-and-bolts perspective on the support received during the connector project.

EQ 2: To what extent have partner organizations more effectively engaged in interreligious development and peace initiatives?

> *Finding 2:* Partner organizations were able to engage more effectively in interreligious action (IRA) through new partnerships with faith-based organizations from other religions, enhanced confidence in being able to engage effectively with the other out of a deeper understanding of their faith, and increased knowledge of and skills in facilitation and communication.

EQ 3: To what extent have CRS partners developed/strengthened organizational strategies for interreligious engagement?

> *Finding 3:* CIRCA has had little influence over broad organizational strategies for IRA in the participating organizations. Instead its influence focused on individual uptake of IRA processes, skills, and content.

Findings Related to Learning

EQ 4: How valid was CIRCA's theory of change?

> *Finding 4:* The theory of change contains incomplete results chains and outcomes unsupported by activities, and could be more user-friendly.

EQ 5: What additional lessons can be drawn from the CIRCA experience to enhance interreligious—specifically Muslim-Christian—social cohesion efforts in the program areas?

> *Finding 5:* Effective IRA requires personal preparation and accurate up-to-date information about the people, issues, conflicts, culture, and religion of key stakeholders. It also requires strategic choices, transparency, and patience.

EQ 6: What were the gender dynamics at play in the CIRCA project, and how did the project respond to these?

> *Finding 6:* The program considered gender dynamics at key moments and involved more women in the connector projects than the CIRCA training.

EQ 7: How do the participating partners understand the success or effectiveness of their peace work?

> *Finding 7:* Understandings of success were split, with one camp focused on how work was done (e.g., through interreligious collaboration), and the other camp focused on achieving the central development action in the connector projects (e.g., finding water).

EQ 8: How do the participating partners understand the religious dimension of their peace work?

> *Finding 8:* CIRCA has established a balance between the spiritual, cognitive, and practical motives for engaging in IRA, enabling participants to find a place fitting their motivation, whatever that might be.

The IRA training and practical skill strengthening experiences offered by CIRCA were significant. The curriculum alone may be of value to many for years to come. The training workshops opened space for participants to explore the spiritual and cognitive dimension of IRA. The training workshops not only increased understanding of the faith of the other, they also pushed participants to examine the role of peace in their own faith.

The program was most significant where it has touched those most directly involved—community CP committee members and CIRCA trainees. The relational changes reported are testimony to the program's effectiveness in promoting peaceful coexistence. The long-term significance of the connector projects will depend on how long people see the project as testimony of what different faith groups working together can accomplish. It will also depend on whether or not and they can build on their experience to use interreligious collaboration to address emergent needs, opportunities, and conflicts.

Strategic recommendations included preserving public demonstrations of interreligious collaboration by high-level religious leaders and continuing to include both high-level religious leaders and staff as CIRCA trainees. Future CIRCA programming should strive to work from a formal conflict analysis, build-in

strategies for engaging relevant state actors, and include women leaders who are religious in the CIRCA training.

Operational recommendations involve siting CPs in areas where other activity is ongoing, and considering ways to deal with structural violence. CIRCA should consider multipliers that make its curriculum accessible to community-based and other key actors. User-friendly formatting of theories of change and early staff involvement in establishing evaluation rubrics can contribute to a common understanding of how the program works. The program should preserve its open spaces for the different spiritual, cognitive, and practical motives that drive people to engage in IRA. Gender should be mainstreamed into the curriculum. Greater clarity and intentionality on how the program catalyzes network and platforms—and how organizational capacities deepen—will need to be part of any similar programming.

The prospects for a second phase involve a number of considerations including who to involve, determining the conflicts to take on, adding new processes and/or depth to key interreligious and peacebuilding processes, and the means of institutionalizing IRA. Choices around these issues will also help in determining whether to remain focused on the community level or to add or substitute policy related and/or larger societal issues.

Background

Context

Unfortunately, a conflict analysis for each of the six countries is beyond the scope of the evaluation. There are however, drivers that are common to two or more countries. Those drivers include:

Discrimination and marginalization: We heard about discrimination based on religion relating to civil service employment, housing, land acquisition, and locating places of worship, in addition to research on differential sentencing for different faith groups in customary and statutory law.

Loss of recognition, access, and power: The minority finds fewer or less equitable avenues open to them to engage in development.

Isolation from the other faiths: The main problem in Egypt, according Mohamed Abu Nimer, is, "growing sectarianism: people live in faith-based, isolated communities…." In Niger interaction between minority Christian and majority Muslim is marred with fear and suspicion. In Nigeria "the greatest Islamo-Christian nation in the world" the relationship alternates between "conflict to concord, from polemics to dialogue, from commercial cooperation to open confrontation." [2]

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[2] Akinade, Akintunde E., *The Precarious Agenda: Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Nigeria.* Lecture, High Point University, 2002.

Ignorance and fear: Living in isolation perpetuates ignorance, which feeds into fear and suspicion. Numerous people we spoke with stated that prior to their exposure through CIRCA, they were afraid and suspicious of the other.

Deteriorating influence of the state: In Egypt, Mohamed Abu Nimer, noted that "Religion replaced the withdrawing state and collapsed civil society in providing social services. Muslims resort to mosques to seek social support and Christians to the churches. Children go to different summer camps, patients to different polyclinics."[3] In many underdeveloped regions in Sub-Saharan Africa, provision of services is mainly by faith-based organizations. For example, in Matolani, Malindi, an under-developed region, the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) was called upon by the local government to help resolve a dispute between the communities.

Impunity: Previous norms on how to treat minorities are ignored. This happens in security vacuums during political upheaval and transitions. Opportunists emerge and communities tend to consolidate in order to minimize their exposure to risk and uncertainty.

Political instrumentalization of religion: Appropriating religion for political purposes is not always violent. Voting blocs based on religion still exist in several of the countries where CIRCA was implemented. In Uganda, politicians have, in the past, appropriated religion to mobilize votes depending on the majority faith followers in a constituency. In both Uganda and Kenya, religious leaders have been aligned to political parties based on ethnic affiliation, causing a rift within.

Violent extremism: As the proposal to GHR points out, "Many partners are operating in contexts of growing extremism/fundamentalism, with tensions rising between Muslims and Christians." In northern Nigeria, the effects of Boko Haram, an insurgent group operating from Maiduguri, has spilled over to neighboring countries. In Kenya, Al-Shaabab has carried out attacks in Garissa where the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK) implemented their connector project. In Zinder and Niamey, Niger, violence targeting Christian institutions occurred in January 2016 as a reaction to caricature of revered prophet of Islam that were printed outside Niger.

Program Description

The Capacity for Interreligious Community Action program[4] (CIRCA) is a three-year capacity-building program financed by the GHR Foundation and supplemented by Catholic Relief Services. The overarching goal of the program was to contribute to human development and more peaceful coexistence among designated local Muslim and Christian communities in Egypt, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. The program had two components: training and practical application by the participants of the knowledge they had acquired from the trainings. The program focus is knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA) for interreligious action, and sought to strengthen the capacity of: a) individuals

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[3] Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, et. al. 2007. *Interfaith Dialogue in Egypt: National Unity and Tolerance*. United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, D.C.
[4] CIRCA is referred to here as a program in order to distinguish it from the connector projects.

through deeper knowledge, more positive attitudes, and enhanced practical skills, and b) organizations, through growing engagements, networking, and effective cooperation with others.

The program operated at local levels, although a few of the partners are national-level actors. The criteria for connector project selection was a multireligious area—particularly Muslim and Christian—where there has been conflict. This was not uniform across all participating countries and was not based on a formal written conflict analysis. In Kenya, CICC elected to return to a conflict it had worked on previously with limited success. Other places based their selection on convenience.

The Program Approach

According to the CIRCA training manual,[5] interfaith or interreligious action is "the deliberate union of different faith groups who agree to forge an alliance in order to jointly carry out activities in society." Interreligious action may operate in the spiritual, cognitive, and practical dimensions.

Religious sensitivity is another important component within CIRCA. The training manual explains that "an interfaith collaboration has to consider any religious sensitivities of all faith groups involved in the collaboration. These include, but are not limited to, common and divergent faith values, religious calendars, and rituals. This collaboration is founded on respect and trust that the perspectives of each faith group will be acknowledged."

The project's two strategic capacity-building objectives focus primarily on capacities of the partners and CRS, not the communities per se or local structures. The first objective was "partners effectively support Muslim and Christian leaders, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities." The second was "partner organizations more effectively engaged in interreligious development and peace initiatives." CRS defines capacity as "the ability of individuals and organization units to perform functions effectively, efficiently, and in a sustainable manner." In CIRCA, the key function refers to the facilitation of interreligious action.

CRS has developed the following theory of change for CIRCA: "If key CRS and partner staff develop more positive attitudes, improve knowledge and skills for Muslim-Christian cooperation, and have opportunities to develop and implement joint Muslim-Christian projects focused on the common good, then they will contribute to human development and peaceful coexistence through interfaith networks and practical action." The CIRCA program theories of change are the focus of one of the evaluation questions and will be discussed in greater detail under the section on evaluation findings.

Program Activities

Broadly, the program activities fall into two categories implemented consecutively: training and practice. The first two years were devoted to an extensive eight-module training covering peacebuilding, partnership, and collaboration for Christian and Muslim leaders as well as staff and volunteers of faith-based NGOs. Additional training/accompaniment was carried out during the implementation of the

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[5] An unpublished CRS document

connector project. The participants applied their newly enhanced knowledge and skills in interreligious actions in support of local Muslim, Christian, and community leaders, including youth and women, who worked together on practical local projects of shared interest, known as connector projects (CP). As a result, the program envisioned partner organizations engaging more effectively in interreligious development and peace initiatives at an organizational level.

The training covered faith-based teachings on 1) peace and justice; 2) conflict sensitive interreligious community action; 3) partnership and collaboration; 4) transformative leadership and change management-facilitating workshops, and 5) consensus building (these five were the foundation for interreligious action and paved the way for discussion on the connector project); 6) cross-cultural and cross-religious communication; 7) mediation, negotiation, and interreligious peacebuilding. The methods included lecture, practical exercises, discussion, and experiential learning. Listening to the experiences and perceptions of "religious others," joint reflection, and learning through active mutual engagement were fundamental parts of the training.

In order to provide participants an opportunity to practice newly acquired and enhanced skills, CRS and partners worked with Muslim and Christian organizations and community leaders to identify and jointly plan for the implementation of grassroots interreligious connector projects. Most of these projects took place over the final year (between one year and six months) of the three-year time frame and during the extension into 2017.

The connector projects varied considerably in several ways. In some cases, youth and women were integrated fully in the project committees. In other cases, because of cultural sensitivities on gender, they had their own projects. In some cases, new project committees were formed. In other cases, existing organizations were modified to take on responsibility for the connector project. The joint committees' composition was Muslim and Christian members of the community. CPs cut across several sectors including potable water, natural resource management, poultry keeping, income generation, and environmental sanitation. In one case, the committee was removed and new representatives were appointed by their respective communities. Kenya and Uganda worked with Muslims, Christians, and Traditional faith leaders, whereas the rest focused on Christians and Muslims. They also varied, even within the same country, in their proximity to violence. This effected mobility, security, mental health (e.g., trauma), and risk.

To provide a sense of the scope of the program, the outputs from the two main activities and main players are listed below. A total of 118 participants went through the CIRCA training: 45 Muslims, 71 Christians, and 2 Traditionalists. Twelve connector projects were launched.

Table A. Overview by country

Country	CIRCA trainees*	Type of connector project/location	Primary partners
Kenya	11 Muslims 25 Christians (8 AOSK) 2 Traditionalists	Potable water/Matolani Micro-finance projects for women and youth/Garissa	Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC), Malindi Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya, Garissa
Niger	9 Muslims 9 Christians	Youth income generation/Konni Women income generation/Konni Youth/Agadez Women/Agadez	Islamo-Christian Dialogue Commission
Nigeria	7 Muslims 16 Christians	Environmental sanitation/ Sokoto Potable water/Kano Potable water/Maiduguri	Diocese of Sokoto Diocese of Kano Diocese of Maiduguri, Jama'atu Nasril Islam Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria
Tanzania	4 Muslims 8 Christians	Poultry keeping and farming/Dar es Salaam	Tanzania Episcopal Conference The National Muslim Council of Tanzania Christian Council of Tanzania
Egypt	4 Muslims 5 Christians	Early childhood learning center (nursery school)—for both Sohag and Luxor	Coptic Catholic Diocese of Sohag Coptic Catholic Diocese of Diocese of Luxor Nour El Islam Community Development Agency
Uganda	10 Muslims 8 Christians	Honey processing plant in Yumbe	Nile Dialogue Platform Uganda Joint Christian Council

* "Trainees" refers to participants who completed at least four workshops and applied their learning to a connector project in two or more visits.

The program was led by a travelling full-time project manager who brought technical skills in interreligious work and peacebuilding. Currently, CIRCA has two full-time employees. The CIRCA project assistant joined in April 2016. From its inception, the project had only one full-time employee who worked with contact persons identified in each country program.

Evaluation Overview

The purpose of this final evaluation is twofold: to assess the merit and significance of the project and to glean lessons about the processes and enabling/constraining factors for strengthening interreligious (specifically Muslim-Christian) cooperation and social cohesion.

The evaluation departs from the routine Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee evaluation objectives in order to generate knowledge and capture learning that the evaluation commissioners believe will be useful in the design of a second phase of the program.

The bulk of the evaluation questions are qualitative in nature. The evaluation addresses the following evaluation questions, which are clustered into two groups: effectiveness and learning.

Effectiveness

EQ 1: To what extent have partners effectively supported Muslim and Christian leaders, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities?

EQ 2: To what extent have partner organizations more effectively engaged in interreligious development and peace initiatives?

EQ 3: To what extent have CRS partners developed/strengthened organizational strategies for interreligious engagement?

Learning

EQ 4: How valid was CIRCA's theory of change?

EQ 5: What additional lessons can be drawn from the CIRCA experience to enhance interreligious— specifically Muslim-Christian—social cohesion efforts in the program areas?

EQ 6: What were the gender dynamics at play in the CIRCA project, and how did the project respond to these?

EQ 7: How do the participating partners understand the success or effectiveness of their peace work?

EQ 8: How do the participating partners understand the religious dimension of their peace work?

Initial evaluation planning involved setting boundaries for the evaluation (what is inside and outside the evaluation). Part of the bounding discussion includes what will not be covered in the evaluation. In this case, efficiency and sustainability were excluded. Given the very local application and the numerous CP sites, relevance was not included. The three countries visited by the external evaluator were the more information-rich cases. They had advanced further in their processes.

There was no intent to compare one CP or one country to another. The unit of analysis is the CIRCA program, not its many community-based incarnations. The idea is to harvest the collective learning, not compare different counties' performance.

CIRCA, as its name implies, is a capacity-building program. The connector projects were foremost a training grounds for CIRCA trainees and secondarily social change initiatives. Aside from a few discussions with community leaders, the evaluation did not cover the larger community. Nor did it include organization capacity assessments for the 18 organizations involved.

Originally, CRS proposed more than 20 evaluation questions. These were negotiated based on their feasibility and utility. The following three evaluation questions are illustrative of the questions that were excluded. Other questions were consolidated or revised.

1. What adaptations to the project model could enhance project efficiency?
2. To what degree was CIRCA aligned with/how was CIRCA related to other relevant CRS programming in the target countries?
3. How has the project catalyzed new/or stronger partnerships and networks intended to serve as platforms for sustained interreligious action for peace and development post-project?

The evaluator prepared simulated data tables for five out of eight questions for CRS to ensure that the questions asked would generate information useful to them. Time constraints made this exercise less productive than we would have liked. The actual responses and real data were considerably less nuanced, less diverse, and more homogeneous than the anticipated responses in the simulation. This required developing new or modified ways of organizing the data at the time of data analysis.

Data was collection through semi-structured interviews, document review, observation, discussion on significant change stories, workshops, and a mini-survey of CIRCA trainees. Interviewers included the external evaluator and the CIRCA program manager. The external evaluator interviewed the vast majority of the CIRCA trainees. The mini-survey was limited to two questions from the baseline. The evaluation included brief workshops with the connector project participants who identified what they determined were significant change stories about relations between Muslims and Christians within the connector project and, in a second round, within the larger community.

An evaluation rubric was created in coordination with CRS in order to assess the value or merit of the project. Four success factors were taken from the original proposal to GHR, and a scale was created for each factor. Over the course of the workshop, participants situated their work within each scale and offered evidence and arguments in support of their ranking. The rubric served to orient the discussion and inform the finding on the program's overall merit, as requested in the evaluation TOR.

The initial idea was for the evaluator to arrive at the rubric rankings, at least for the countries visited. This however, left out half the group. To have at least one means of looking at all six countries as one program, completion of the rubric shifted from the evaluator to the CIRCA trainees in each country, becoming, in effect, a self-appraisal.

Given the larger turnover in personnel within the partner organizations and CRS, conducting a strict qualitative baseline/endline comparison was not promising. Instead, we looked at the relative ranking of CIRCA trainees' confidence in key competencies and capacities by country.

Data from interviews of CIRCA trainees and connector project participants were entered into one database. Different sorts and disaggregation were compiled in an effort to identify patterns and make sense of the data. In some cases, these were then organized into typologies capturing the considerations given to specific evaluation questions. Here, the intent was to identify the complete realm of possibilities rather than run frequency counts. The fact that only one interlocutor identified a critical principle of IRA does not make that principle any less important than a principle identified by 20 people.

To assess the theory of change, the evaluator first unpacked the theory and the program design into a logic model. The evaluator then identified the key program theories of change implicit in the model. Both the logic model and the program theories were reflected back to CRS for comment. The specific

program theories of change were discussed in the workshops. Based on feedback from the participants and knowledge of how the program theories played out in practice, a finding was made.

There are a number of threats to data validity. Some of these are inherent to any social science research at this level. Others were more logistical and organizational. Specific threats to data validity included: :

- Internal data collectors' potential bias
- Social desirability bias
- Quality of translation
- CIRCA staff and participant turnover

Data from the non-visited countries (Tanzania, Uganda, and Egypt) was based on an internally facilitated two-day workshop. This offered no way for the external evaluator on the team to validate or triangulate using a variety of data collection method or sources. This tended to limit references to those programs, except in the self-ranking as part of the evaluation rubric.

There was very limited input from CRS country project coordinators into the design and implementation of the evaluation. Due to high rates of turnover/transfer, many of the CRS staff who participated in the baseline study are no longer in the same position and did not participate in the full project.

To address these concerns as much as possible, each finding is supported by rationale and argumentation stemming from multiple sources. Findings are based on information from the document review, significant change stories, mini-survey responses, semi-structured interviews, and/or direct observation during the two-day workshops. The implications for each finding are stated and the conclusions are based on the findings and their implications.

Evaluation findings

At the time the three countries were visited, only the Niger connector projects were fully operational and completed. Water had yet to be struck in Malindi, and Kenya and the Sokoto and Kano, Nigeria, projects had not fully worked out the fee and remuneration components of their income-generating projects, even though refuse removal and drainage repairs were under way in Sokoto.

Originally, there was to be one connector project per country: the number of connector projects (under GHR funds) was to be four and was increased to six then to twelve. Initially, Niger and Nigeria were to be one cohort (therefore one connector project), and in Kenya, the plan was to have one group of CICC and AOSK (one connector project). Activities for Uganda were to be funded by the East Africa Regional Office. During the connector project planning, it became apparent that with only six connector projects trainees would not be able to apply the knowledge since they came from near and far, making it difficult for some to be part of a distant connector project. Additional CP sites (supplemented by CRS under AIP) were added to give more trainees an opportunity to practice IRA.

Effective Support

EQ 1: To what extent have partners effectively supported Muslim and Christian leaders, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities?

> *"The curate can be a friend to the imam, but the children don't know they can be friends."* —Christian male

> **Finding 1**: Across the four connector projects visited, there was a wide range of types of support. CIRCA trainees identified more pastoral roles—those already part of their service as spiritual leaders—while CP participants had more practical, nuts-and-bolts perspectives on the support received during the connector project.

Rationale

The types of support identified by CIRCA trainees and CP participants fell into four categories:

1. Convening: bringing people together
2. Formational: awareness-raising and training
3. Intervention: problem-solving
4. Implementation: getting things done

Tracking individual incidents of each type of support and comparing them with the needs for support throughout the life of the connector projects visited exceeded the scope of the evaluation. Of the broader types of support identified, the greatest number of examples were in the formation category, and within that category, awareness-raising was mentioned most often.

Pastoral roles are concentrated more in convening, formation, and intervention than they are in implementation. Bringing people together preceded working on the connector project hardware. In Matolani, Kenya, for example, clerics of all three faiths (Muslim, Christian, and Traditionalist) jointly engaged in outreach sessions to all five participating villages.

External support from local authorities was also important. In Konni, Niger, community leaders, local government and religious officials endorsed and legitimized the CPs by raising the projects' profiles and giving people permission to engage the other. The resident CIRCA trainee was instrumental in bringing together authorities and project leadership. When asked what support was missing, the most common response among CP participants in all three countries was "just resources," meaning financial and material resources.

In Table A, CP participants are describing the CIRCA trainees' application of their training, and CIRCA trainees are reflecting on their own service. The table shows how the different types of support mapped out according to the separate and overlapping perceptions of the two groups. Keep in mind that CP participants may not have experienced all the different forms of support provided over the course of the connector project.

Table B. Actual *pastoral** and practical types of support received according to CIRCA trainees and connector project participants[6]

	Convening	Formation	Intervention	Implementation
Exclusively mentioned by CIRCA trainees	Meeting attendance Encourage participation	*Moral support/coaching* Needs assessment	Advocacy Facilitation & mediation *Praying for them*	Logistics Providing security Budget monitoring Reporting
Mentioned by both CIRCA trainees & CP participants	*Bringing people together*	*Training/educating* *Awareness raising* Helping youth become responsible	Problem-solving *Giving advice*	Monitoring participation
Exclusively mentioned by CP participants				Money & materials Creating an organization Management & decision making *Outreach to other villages*

* Roles that are significantly pastoral are in italics. The labels on the categories were assigned by the evaluator. The language in the table comes from the people we interviewed.

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[6] Disaggregating the response by religion did not reveal any noticeable differences and inclusion here complicates the presentation of the essential data

Joint public demonstrations of collaboration between Muslim and Christian religious leaders were important in launching IRAs. These public appearances demonstrated that there are no religious taboos to working with the other, and that collaboration with the other is not a bad reflection of one's faith, but rather a commitment to their communities' development. They also helped to ease concerns about conversion.

In Matolani, Kenya, these public demonstrations were repeated in the form of town hall meetings in all five of the participating villages. In another case in Uganda, a photograph of one religious leader (Catholic and Muslim) helping another was made into a calendar and circulated widely. Whatever the channel, the power of religious leaders modeling collaboration helped legitimize collaboration across faiths and was so helpful that one has to wonder if this is an essential early component of IRA.

Implications

The finding has implications for the sequencing of CIRCA activities and the targeting of CIRCA trainees. The diverse and complicated roles of those facilitating interreligious action affirm CIRCA's choice of sequencing the training in advance of the practicum. Simultaneous training and project implementation runs the risk of implementation challenges (action) overwhelming the pastoral (interreligious) progress.

The CIRCA experience raises questions about who needs to be involved in which IRA activities. Higher-level authorities generally have more convening power, but may not be available to accompany the project. Those with pastoral responsibilities may not be versed in project management or these functions may not be the responsibility of a single person. Future training may need to be customized by type of support. At the same time, efforts will need to be made to ensure coordination and synergies in both the pastoral and project management functions.

Effective Engagement

EQ 2: To what extent have partner organizations more effectively engaged in interreligious development and peace initiatives?

> *"The sustained dialogue meetings helped demystify the perceptions of the other community."* —CIRCA trainee

CIRCA provided a well-received conceptual framework for interreligious action along with structured processes and the essential knowledge and skills needed to put those processes to work. This began with self-understanding as part of the training and moved into facilitation of interfaith groups at the community level.

> ***Finding 2***: Partner organizations were able to engage more effectively in IRA through new partnerships with faith-based organizations from other religions, enhanced confidence in being able to engage effectively with the other out of a deeper understanding of their faith, and increased knowledge of and skills in facilitation and communication.

Rationale

Each participant entered CIRCA with different capacities, experiences, and orientations toward interreligious action and community engagement; needs assessments; and project design, management, and administration. Their participation in the connector projects also varied. Some were not able to apply their skills over the course of the program due to distance and other operational challenges that were internal to one of the partner organization. Others near to a CP were able to engage frequently, and others who were not able to obtain CIRCA funding for a CP applied their new skills and knowledge to other initiatives.

Although some trainees were already experienced in IRA, many were just beginning. For them, their significant change stories revolved around personal growth and development. This included changes in awareness, attitude, and confidence. Their stories of personal transformation reflect their progress along a spectrum. For some, these personal changes were prerequisites to service as a facilitator of a community-based IRA. Their development did not stop there.

> "*One thing we focused on is not just the project but what is the connector between the communities. So not just thinking about the immediate results of the project, but the long-term goal of coexistence and peace between the two communities.*" —CIRCA trainee

This proved harder for some CPs than others when a series of obstacles, delays, and problems set in. Ironically these setbacks provided opportunities for people to work together to overcome adversity. In some cases, before the CP was finished and could bring people together around its intended function, a new collaborative dynamic was being established and reinforced with each new implementation hurdle.

Among the change stories during the workshop in all six countries, CIRCA trainees considered partnership to be an important change. This is less about successful strategies in facilitating partnerships, and more about just being in partnership with faith-based organizations that were different from one's own faith. Trainees also referred to interagency collaboration in leveraging resources. In Luxor, Egypt, for example, the CP was a nursery school owned by the Franciscan Order. The Franciscans provided the structure, and the diocese and Noor el Islam brought in the resources, knowledge, and skills to promote IR relation in the community. In other cases, partners were able to work around the different policies within their respective organizations. Two service delivery organizations dropped their exclusive one-faith-only practices and instead started working with communities as a whole.

An increased capacity in conflict resolution was noted both internally within the partner organizations and within partnerships. "It enabled us to solve conflicts in the community in a skilled way," explained one CIRCA trainee. This did not always translate into improvements in local capacities. In rural Matolani, Kenya, none of the CIRCA trainees served or lived in the program area to the same degree as some CIRCA trainees did in urban areas. The focus of CIRCA was foremost on building the capacities of partner organizations, not community capacities.

Although not entirely due to CIRCA, one participant noted that CICC became a focal point for IR training and consulting for other organizations. One partner explained that CIRCA helped to "improve our credibility in the community." Others reported an enhanced capacity to convene religious leaders and authorities to events and meetings.

Some partners lamented the absence of a "step down" training for frontline religious leaders and community members. Others, building off the CIRCA materials, independently just went ahead and customized their own training workshops for communities. Another saw a ready-made opening, by using Savings and Internal Lending Communities as an informal "space to engage with the other."

The evaluation conducted a mini-survey asking CIRCA trainees to rank their competencies in key areas of IRA. As the following table illustrates, only facilitating project design and development shifted more than one level, in this case downwards. The data was collected at the height of the CPs when participants were still grappling with implementation challenges.

Table C. Comparison of baseline and endline relative competency ratings from high to low

Baseline rankings		End-line rankings
Facilitating interreligious dialogue/ engagement		Promoting inclusion—enabling men and women to work together
Promoting inclusion—enabling men and women to work together		Facilitating interreligious dialogue/ engagement
Coaching and mentoring youth		Coaching and mentoring youth
Facilitating project design and development		Conflict analysis
Conflict analysis		Facilitating consensus
Facilitating consensus		Mediation
Mediation		Facilitating project design and development

The composite overview tends to mask information specific to particular countries. For example:

- Mediation showed slight improvement in the rankings everywhere and a dramatic improvement in Tanzania.[7] Participants appreciated having a more formal process they could use.
- Relative ranking of personal competency in project design decreased or remained the same everywhere but Niger, where it increased slightly. This may be because, at the baseline, the CPs had yet to be designed, whereas at the time the data was collected, CPs were still facing some implementation problems relating to the design of the project.
- In Egypt and Tanzania, conflict analysis leapfrogged other processes. Egypt was able to add to their existing toolkit acquired through earlier programming.
- In Kenya (CICC), facilitating IRA lost ground to facilitating consensus and mediation. Given their history with IRA, facilitating consensus and mediation offered something new and immediately useful.

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[7] With the single source of information in Tanzania, Egypt, and Uganda being a self-reflection workshop, there was often insufficient data to explain developments those countries.

Comparing the composite rankings of competencies in key processes for all six countries revealed little difference between the baseline[8] and endline data. This might be explained by the large turnover in staff. CRS was understandably reticent about conducting a full endline study similar to the baseline, largely because of the high staff turnover in CRS and the partner organizations. The results of the mini-survey affirm the decision not to repeat the baseline in full.

The lack of shifts in the rankings on key competencies may reflect the adaptive and comprehensive nature of the training. Perhaps different people found different things that addressed their specific needs and interests. Alternatively, it could indicate that the baseline's service as a need assessment worked well.

Among the four success criteria (peaceful coexistence, effectiveness of IRA, learning, and capitalizing networks) the spread of the rankings across the evaluation matrix was the widest in IRA effectiveness (see Table D). This suggests a difference between competency in general, which appears relatively unchanged, and achievements specific to CIRCA.

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[8] The baseline was carried out prior to the development of the curriculum, hence the variation in themes.

Table D. Self-ranking on evaluation rubric for effective interreligious action

	No change	*Marginal improvements*	*Significant improvements*	*Catalytic influence*	*Institutionalization*
Effective interreligious action	No new interreligious actions beyond CIRCA	Isolated one-off interreligious action in addition to CIRCA	Multiple interreligious actions enjoy widespread local support among both communities	Areas external to and independent of the project area initiate interreligious actions based on CIRCA experience	New interreligious actions institutionalized
		Egypt	Nigeria, Tanzania	Kenya, Niger	Uganda

Implications

This finding illustrates some of the many factors that go into effective IRA. These include:

- Partnerships among differently oriented faith-based organizations
- Mastery over a wide set of skills: conflict sensitivity, facilitation, communication, and mediation
- Reach beyond the immediate intervention that integrates IRA into existing processes and/or spawns other IRA
- Religious leaders' credibility and local support

The wide range of placements within the evaluation matrix suggests that these factors do not remain static and may vary from one action to another. A more detailed list of factors enabling effective IRA is found in the conclusion.

Organizational Strategies

EQ 3: To what extent have CRS partners developed/strengthened organizational strategies for interreligious engagement?

> *"It is a step forward that we are now involved with other faith groups."* —Muslim male

> **Finding 3**: CIRCA has had little influence over broad organizational strategies for IRA in the participating organization. Instead, its influence focused on individual uptake of IRA processes, skills, and content.

Rationale

All of the organizations in the three countries visited reported having some sort of strategic plan. Several of the plans predate CIRCA and therefore could not reflect any influence from CIRCA. For some organizations, IRA was already integral to their mission. In the case of CICC and the Diocese of Konni, Niger, IRA is a foundational, long-standing and well-developed component of their organizations. For CICC, IRA is "the reason we exist." The Christian community in Niger is so small that it has to rely on an interfaith approach to pretty much everything it does. Inclusion of Muslims is cited on almost every programmatic page of the plan. As one trainee explained, "Our priority is to reach Muslim brothers and to preserve the relationships and social capital with the imams and their children." Partners with prior IRA experience report that their organizations' approach to IRA has not changed.

There are no explicit organizational or strategic development activities within CIRCA, only an assumption that staff trained over two and a half years would take their own independent initiatives to integrate their learning during CIRCA into their organizations' ways of engaging in IRA. Put another way, while CIRCA aimed to strengthen organizational capacity and strategies, the project activities were primarily oriented towards building knowledge/skills/attitudes of organizational designees. This comes up again in the finding related to the program's theory of change.

Many CIRCA trainees in the three countries visited were senior and influential leaders within their organizations or faiths. They included bishops, board members, directors, and key staff people among other participants. These are people who need to weigh the relative importance of IRA along with their other institutional priorities and interests. Authority and influence do not automatically translate into

expertise in organizational development, or time with which to train others. Fortunately, where high-level leaders were involved, they were joined by staff quite capable of making the trains run. This combination of authority and dexterity is important in selecting CIRCA trainees.

Given the small number of people involved in the CIRCA training representing the larger participating organizations, the doses—in terms of human resources—were relatively modest. As one participant pointed out, "Training only two people in an organization, considering the massive membership of FOMWAN, is not sufficient to step down the information received from CIRCA to reach more members in the organization."

When asked, "Which of the training themes was most useful to your organization?" the most common responses were as follows.

Table E. Training themes most useful for my organization[9]

Module	Muslim	Christian	Traditional	Total
Conflict sensitivity	1	3	0	4
Faith-based teachings on peace and justice	1	2	0	3
Cross-cultural and cross-religious communication for interreligious action	0	2	0	2
Mediation, negotiation, and interreligious peacebuilding	2	0	0	2
Facilitating workshops and consensus building for interreligious action	1	1	0	2
Interreligious conflict prevention and peacebuilding	0	1	1	2
Partnership and collaboration for interreligious action	0	0	0	0
Transformative leadership and change management	0	0	0	0

Where CIRCA may have had little influence over partners' direction or strategic orientation, it did provide participants with processes not formerly available in-house. "CIRCA has enhanced our work in bringing religious leaders together," one participant commented. As one CIRCA trainee explained, "Previously, we approached the community in a personal way without clear guidelines."

CIRCA has influenced the content of planned human resource development. For example, CICC's strategic plan includes training for 3,000 clerics over five years. The CIRCA manual will be part of the

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[9] Only responses from CIRCA trainees who completed all the workshops were included here.

core curricula for this training. CICC intends to use its own trainers, and it remains to be seen how CIRCA graduates will be involved.

Implications

The CIRCA program design recognizes the importance of organizational strategies. While it aspires to assist partners in enhancing their organizational capacity for IRA, it only offers training and practice as capacity-building activities, and even then, to too few people to have much influence with larger partner organizations. Organizations are left to their own devices to decide if and how to use the CIRCA experience when deliberating over strategy.

The baseline provides useful information on organizational capacities relevant to IRA disaggregated by country, not by partner organization. Profiles on capacities of the individual organization could begin with the baseline data. Based on what that looks like, additional organizational capacity assessment tools could be developed and used to provide an assessment that could be repeated as needed. This in turn implies more work in contextualizing the training program to fit/suit the varying needs of the individual organizations and individual participants.

Theories of Change

EQ 4: How valid was CIRCA's theory of change?

> *"90 percent of the process was to get the partners in the room to learn, then 10 percent was the final part or practical application."* —CIRCA trainee

The overall CIRCA theory of change in the program design reads as follows:

If key CRS and partner staff develop more positive attitudes, improve knowledge and skills for Muslim-Christian cooperation, and have opportunities to develop and implement joint Muslim-Christian projects focused on the common good, **then** they will contribute to human development and peaceful coexistence through interfaith networks and practical action.

> ***Finding 4***: The theory of change contains incomplete results chains and outcomes unsupported by activities, and is not user-friendly.

Rationale

Unpacking the theories

Theories of change expressed as a single run-on sentence for proposal writing tend to mask key prerequisites and milestones important to program implementers. Addressing this evaluation question required repackaging the statement into a logic model and unpacking the program theories of change implicit in the model.

In order to develop the logic model, the evaluator identified all the changes mentioned in the proposal to GHR. These were then sequenced in keeping with the proposal's intentions and mapped into the following model. The arrows in the model mean "influence," not "cause."

By unpacking the theory and laying out the logic model, implicit program theories of change can be identified. In this case four program theories were evident:

1. If CRS and partner staff are trained jointly on interreligious action, then new knowledge, skills, and relationships will reduce ideational, emotional, and competency impediments and lead to more positive attitudes about Muslim/Christian cooperation.
2. If newly acquired/strengthened knowledge, skills, and attitudes are applied to a joint connector project, this will strengthen organizational capacities and strategies of interreligious engagement.
3. If a joint connector project can leverage new and long-term partnerships and networks for interreligious action, then there will be more peaceful coexistence among Muslims and Christians.
4. If there is more peaceful coexistence among Christians and Muslims, then human suffering will be prevented and the quality of life will improve.

Theory plausibility

In many programs, the higher up the results framework one goes, the larger the stretches in logic become, and the more assumptions one finds. CIRCA is no exception. Participants identified additional intermediate accomplishments needed to reach stated outcomes. For example, it is hard to see how a capacity-building program like CIRCA is going to directly affect human suffering without the contributions of other interventions.

The theory-in-use did not fully align with the theory-in-design, particularly the elements relating to organizational capacities and networks. There are no explicit organizational development activities carried out within CIRCA, only an assumption that staff trained over two and a half years would take their own independent initiatives to integrate their learning during CIRCA into their organizations' ways of engaging in IRA. This amounts to an outcome without any specific supporting organizational development activities.

An argument could be made that modules covering transitional leadership and partnership are important organizational development themes. The intervention, however, is still limited to training, with no other specific means of strengthening organizational development.

A head office reviewer offered a more nuanced explanation:

> *"The project design did call for organizational self-assessments to be done and for defining 'organization-specific capacity strengthening plans based on assessment'—the disconnect being that there was no personnel, financial, or material support planned to support the application of these plans, while the project design was very explicit about the support that would be provided to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes pertinent to IRA. So there was passing recognition in the project design that organizational development would be needed, but no due weight given to this."*

Networking may be as related to scaling up as it is to effectiveness. The youth initiative in Konni, Niger, was relatively effective, although small in size (20 youths). In Konni, neither the youth nor the partner was involved in any networking with other interreligious activists beyond efforts to secure buy-in among

local government and religious leaders. At the same time, well-established interfaith networks, such as CICC, did little to formally make their CIRCA experience known throughout their network.

Participants' perspectives

CIRCA trainees, by and large, found the logic model and the implicit program theories made sense and accurately reflected the program. They had several suggestions for improving the model and the program theories.

Most of their suggestions centered on contextualizing the model and theories. Uganda and Kenya, for example, wanted to include Traditionalists along with Christians and Muslims. Others felt that the model did not distinguish between the different levels of competency among the various partners; some were relatively new whereas others were quite experienced, thanks to other prior and concurrent peacebuilding initiatives. One group proposed inserting the actual names of the partner organizations

Illustration A. CIRCA Project Logic Model
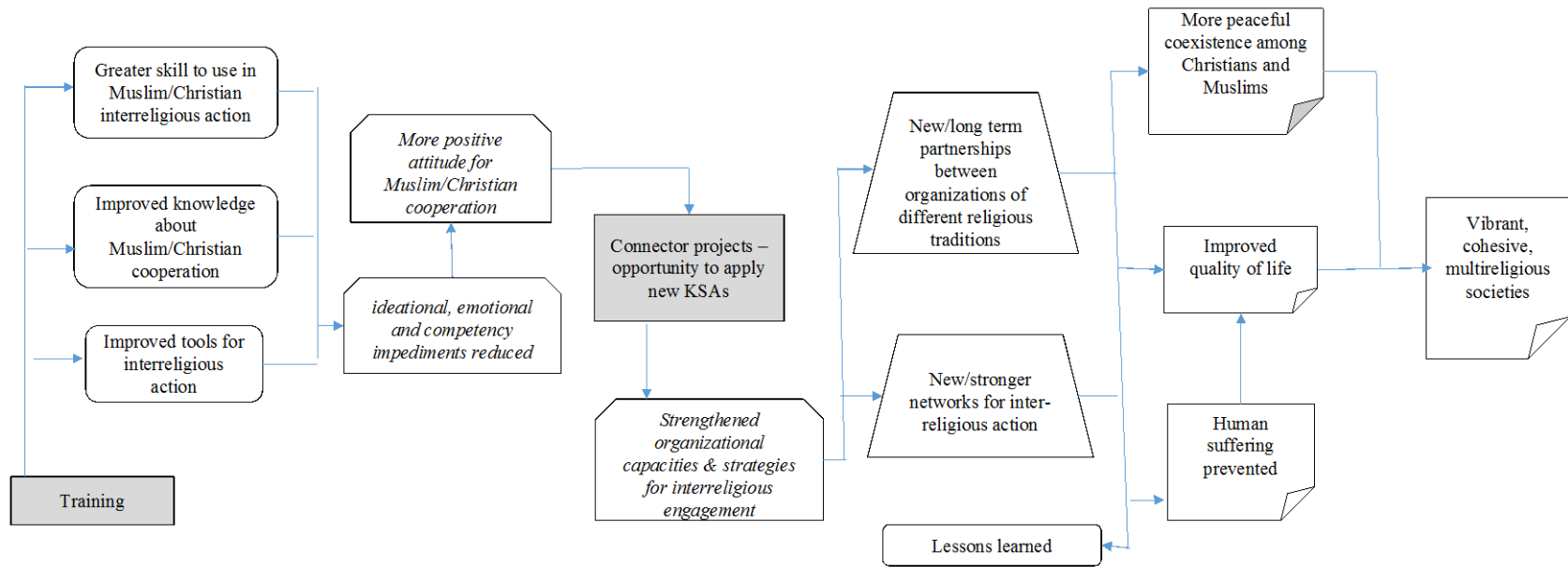
KEY

| Project Activities | Outputs | *Short-term Outcomes* | Medium-term Outcomes | Long-term Outcomes |

Participants pointed out that the theory as it stands—focused on CRS and partners operating exclusively at the local level—is unlikely to achieve lasting improvements in Christian/Muslim relations. Neither SO targets change at the community level, which several people thought was missing from the overall design. To complicate matters, for that to happen in Niger, hardliners would also need to engage in both intra- and interfaith action. Others pointed to the need for additional interventions that would be required at the higher end of the framework, such as policy work.

Several participants felt that the first activity in the model should have been the needs assessment they conducted, as this was their experience. They pointed out that of the "ideational, emotional, and competency impediments" mentioned in the program design, only the competency impediment reflected their needs.

One participant pointed out a feedback loop that was not captured in the model. He noted that the connector projects influence organizational capacities and organizational capacities influence the connector projects. Put another way, practice influences capacity and capacity affects practice.

Several participants felt that the model needed to reflect timing. More specifically, they felt that the program should have allocated more time for the connector projects.

Implications

> "Good [peacebuilding] practice requires the capacity of theory building." —John Paul Lederach[10]

Unpacking the program theories and laying out a logic map are more helpful to practitioners than dense simplifications assembled at proposal-writing time. As one participant noted, "It would have been better that we understood the theory of change from the beginning."

CRS and others could benefit from a more detailed menu of easily customized IRA-related theories. This would help immensely with planning, implementing, and evaluating future IRA initiatives. It would also help to explore whether or not these theories retained their plausibility when working with hardliners or in more violent contexts. More broadly, this points to the importance of contextualizing the theories of change given that different contexts would have different needs and different entry points.

Lessons in IRA

EQ 5: What lessons can be drawn from the CIRCA experience to enhance interreligious—specifically Muslim-Christian—social cohesion efforts?

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[10] Lederach, John Paul. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

"IRA is a powerful and effective way of addressing the issues affecting the community. It has been symbolic and provided an alternative." —Christian male

A question more befitting to many of the answers we got would have been, "By engaging in interreligious action, what did you learn about yourself?" Many of the significant change stories and lessons identified by both CIRCA trainees and CP participants were about personal transformation. These took the shape of a better understanding of the other's faith, a deeper appreciation of one's own faith, as well as new ways of thinking.

> ***Finding 5****:* Effective IRA requires personal preparation and accurate up-to-date information about the people, issues, conflicts, culture, and religion of key stakeholders. It also requires strategic choices, transparency, and patience.

Rationale

To get at lessons about facilitating IRA, we asked CIRCA trainees and CP participants what advice they would give a peer from a distant place who was considering a program like CIRCA. Their pearls of wisdom based on experience have been synthesized into a composite of advisable practices, many of which have deep roots in community development work.

> *Anticipate and deal with expectations early on.* Collaborative and development initiatives are fraught with expectations, some based on common sense, and others based on dreams, hopes, or false assumptions. These may include expectations of things such as remuneration for community service (as in Sokoto, Nigeria), or repeat investments in big-ticket items (as in the case of Matolani, Kenya). Leaving expectations unaddressed can lead to awkwardness as the project draws to a close.

> *Do your homework*. Much of the guidance offered revolved around good information.

> - Do a good background on the issues at hand, involve the parties, don't sideline anyone, and respect cultural aspects.
> - Do a needs assessment; look at interests and positions of the leaders.
> - Study—learn the cultural values and beliefs.
> - Visit, learn from them, ask questions, and add to what they already have.
> - Know the challenges and issues on the ground.

> *Engage the strategic who*. Engage religious leaders, policy makers, elders, and the entire community. Pay particular attention to include divergent thinking and diversity. Make sure all faiths are presented. Conduct a stakeholder analysis. When the communities are not ready, consider working separately with each group to start. Be courageous in "inviting those who are most entrenched and have no moderation."

> *Pick your entry point*. Possibilities raised by interlocutors include:

> - Use facilitation teams comprised of all faiths.
> - Focus on religious leaders.
> - Implement where there is peace.
> - Engage in something you know will bring peace.

- Bring together the whole community; constitute a committee accepted by all.
- Invite them to give opinions.

Raise awareness. Respondents stressed the importance of training and raising awareness at the community level. They recommend building in step-down workshops. Focus on building local capacity and "train the two religious groups first."

Put your own house in order:

- Be courageous; understand yourself first.
- Know your own religion; be convinced in IRA; be a good mediator, with lots of patience and reflection.
- Don't enter with a hidden agenda—engage fully, be patient, ask others for advice and support; finally, you have to give everything to God.
- First remove fanaticism and be free from the heart.
- Be open to what the process brings.

Other factors that influence the effectiveness of IRA:

- Modeling—collaboration modeled at high levels
- Incentives such as connector projects
- Legitimization by local authorities
- Right sizing—matching the skill sets/capacity to the severity of the conflict
- Vertical (including state institutions) and horizontal networks
- Optional—concurrent peacebuilding programming (Dialogue in Action Project II in Kenya and TA'ALA in Egypt)

We heard few complaints about the faith traditions being differently abled. Either participants were well aware and accepting of the asymmetry in engagements in IRA, or they elected not to raise the issue.

Implications

These lessons could be useful input into the development of an IRA preparedness checklist. Preparations and groundwork require time, skill, staff, and resources. These lessons could be used in the orientation for staff new to IRA. They also point to factors that contribute to effective IRA.

Gender Dynamics

EQ 6: What were the gender dynamics at play in the CIRCA project, and how did the project respond to these?

> "*In their role in community peacebuilding, women are left behind.*" —Religious leader, Kenya

There are no specific actions in the program targeting changes in gender dynamics. The approach to gender dynamics is largely oblique or indirect at best, and accidental at worst, with partner selection being the exception.

Finding 6: The program considered gender dynamics at key moments and involved more women in the connector projects than the CIRCA training.

Rationale

Strategic moments

There were moments in the program when gender issues surfaced and moments that might have included gender issues, but did not.

Table F. Points in the project where gender was considered

Gender in play	Missed opportunities
• Partner selection, namely AOSK & FOMWAN • Staffing • CIRCA trainee selection • Connector project identification/selection • Connector project management committees • As an evaluation question	• Project design • Baseline • CIRCA curriculum

The CIRCA curriculum provides little material or direction on how to advance gender equity where religion and/or culture marginalize women or limit their participation.

Gender issues

We asked, "Which of the following gender concerns have come up over the course of CIRCA activities?" Responses were evenly split between 11 Christians and 12 Muslims and are listed from most frequent to least frequent:

Table G: Gender concerns raised over course of the project

Number of responses	Responses
12	Men's and women's knowledge, beliefs, perceptions about women
12	Leadership and women
12	Physical safety of women
11	Women's participation in project activities
9	Time and space for women to participate
9	Women, power and decision-making
7	Legal rights and status of women

Roles of women in CPs

There was a wide range in responses to an open-ended question about women's roles in interreligious action. One Christian male said, "Women have a big role since conflict affects women and children first." A point of view expressed by a CIRCA trainee was more in alignment with what we heard from CP participants: Women's roles are "educating children and working with other women to encourage what they are doing to live together."

Both men and women in the connector projects noted that women are members of most of the project committees. This was a requirement from CIRCA. Women noted that they also provided outreach to other women. "It is our habit to go toward our sisters, both Muslim and Christian, that is why we meet each other," one participant said. As one man explained, "At the community level, we have said the committee should have women in order to reach other women."

With the exception of the Women's Associations in Konni and Agadez, Niger, it was largely the men who determined how women would be involved. The Niger arrangement of giving women their own project ensured their leadership, whereas the men felt a "mixed" project would have led to women taking a backseat. In Nigeria, one man said, "Women have been involved in the discussions about environmental sanitation and how they will clean the place." Another man explained, "We included them because there are some issues better handled by women."

Modeling alternative roles and ways of engagement was a fundamental element of the program. Religious leaders appeared together in public to demonstrate working together to address common interests. The program manager, a Muslim woman from Kenya, also provided a compelling alternative, not just in her status within the program, but as the primary trainer of mostly male Christian, Muslim, and Traditionalist religious leaders in the three countries visited. The continued involvement of religious leaders sent an implicit message—we believe we have something to learn from her.

Actions

We also asked CIRCA participants, "What have you done to facilitate women's participation in CIRCA activities?" Both Muslim and Christian CIRCA trainees identified actions they had taken to facilitate women's participation in CIRCA-supported activities, and there was more diversity in the types of facilitation identified by Christian respondents. Most of the responses fell into: a) supporting an expanded role for women, and b) training/awareness-raising. The expanded role responses included: advocating for women in leadership, ensuring decisions consider inputs from women, providing women with space to communicate, and inviting women to and trying to convince them to speak out at events and gatherings. Notably missing from the responses are any actions to mainstream gender within the relevant institutions, systems, or structures.

The barriers women face in engaging in IRA may be the same barriers that exist in their respective religious institutions. Mohammed Abu-Nimer[11] points out that, "Women are underrepresented in

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[11] Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. "Religion and Peacebuilding: Reflections on Current Challenges and Future Prospects." *The Journal of Interreligious Studies*, Issue 16 (March 2015).

peacebuilding programs involving religion and particularly in programs involving theological conversations or targeting the institutional leadership." These were both aspects of CIRCA.

Implications

The connector projects opened space for community participants to engage in IRA without theological conversations or focusing on religious leaders. In many projects, women served alongside youth and men in the project management committees. In Konni, Niger, women had their own women's association. In Matolani and Malindi, Kenya, and Yumbe, Uganda, the management committees of the CPs include women.

We asked both CIRCA trainees and CP participants, "What needs to be done to improve women's involvement in IRA?" Responses were consistent among respondents of both faith groups. Their answers fell into three groups with the most frequent answers in the first group and least frequent in the third:

1. Training/education/awareness-raising
2. Expanded roles for women
3. Mainstreaming or integrating women in institutions or structures

Under training/education/awareness-raising, three respondents specifically mentioned training and awareness-raising for men, not just women.

Both responses on mainstreaming specifically mentioned CICC. CICC has plans this year to roll out a women's committee. This group will be separate from the board, which will continue to consist of male clerics. This arrangement is less inclusive than that of the connector project in Matolani and projects elsewhere, where women sit as full members on the project committees. As one religious leader noted, "Our own hypocrisy is likely to catch up with us at some point."

The distinction between what is cultural as opposed to what is religious opens space for identifying common ground and setting boundaries in IRA. Future programming may need to explore theories of change relating to how culture changes. Does cultural change need IRA? How does IRA contribute to cultural change? More specifically, how does IRA affect gender norms and behaviors?

Understanding of Success

EQ7: How do the participating partners understand the success or effectiveness of their peace work?

> *"Even if not from the money we make, we know we've succeeded by the way we treat each other."* —Muslim male youth, CP participant

> **Finding 7**: Understandings of success were split, with one camp focused on how work was done (e.g., through interreligious collaboration), and the other camp focused on achieving the central development action in the connector projects (e.g., finding water).

Rationale

Two sources of data were used to address this evaluation question: 1) interviews with CIRCA trainees and CP participants, and 2) the significant change stories shared during the CIRCA trainee workshop. The question about success in the interviews was open-ended. Descriptions of respondents' understandings of success fall into four categories:

1. *Engagement with the other*: This was by far the most common type of response among both Muslims and Christians. It includes Christians and Muslims eating, laughing, talking, and living together. It also includes strong relationships characterized by understanding and respect. One person mentioned the quality and frequency of interactions and love in place of stereotypes.
2. *Conflict handling*: Here, understanding of success focused on negative peace, such as "people are not fighting anymore" and when "there is no conflict." One person's more systemic understanding of success was "when things come up, people respond peacefully."
3. *Recognition:* These understandings of success focus more on the broader arena. For example, responses included having greater community and a positive reception from traditional and civil authorities.
4. *Internalization*: These understandings involve individual breakthroughs. "You can see it, the openness in others," or when "people have really got it." This includes phone calls expressing appreciation for one's efforts.

None of the CIRCA trainees framed success as the achievement of shared development aspirations/ goals. This contrasted sharply with the understanding of many CP participants who framed success as "water" and "a clean environment."

The changes stemming from CIRCA activities and achievements were firmly anchored in the individual and relational dimensions of change. Examples of relational changes, all of which are also examples of engagement with the other, included changes in greetings, attendances at the other's ceremonies and rites of passage, and using services and purchasing from stores owned by the other.

Rationale

Although many lessons expressed in the interviews were told in the first person and focused on individual transformation, the notions of success were generally framed as relational rather than individual changes. This may be the difference between lessons from past actions as compared to more theoretical, hopeful signals of future success.

One CIRCA trainee alluded to a more systemic orientation in his definition of success: "When things come up, people respond peacefully." Others mentioned having a more formal intervention process, whereas they tended to improvise earlier.

Several CIRCA trainees spoke about unaddressed needs relating to discrimination and structural violence. Others expressed an interest in working with hardliners. The needs addressed through the CPs were not explicitly linked to peace writ large—long-term, broad societal change. Although this may vary from one project area to another, there is a recognized interest among CIRCA trainees in working on structural and cultural dimensions as well.

Implications

Understandings of success can be helpful strategizing future interventions. They may also be helpful in planning and designing future objectives and indicators.

The two foci—IRA and development goal achievement—are not mutually exclusive. Some CP participants needed the promise of development before they would even consider being part of an interreligious approach.

From the understandings of success, it appears IRA may not require a project, only a window of opportunity. For example, the early groundwork in the forms of town hall meetings, awareness-raising, and outreach resulted in improved relations even before the CP was launched. Thinking of IRA outside the parameters of a project greatly expands the field of play for IRA. It can be added on to other events, integrated into sermons by religious leaders, and simply modeled at any number of public initiatives.

Understanding of Religious Dimensions

EQ 8: How do the participating partners understand the religious dimension of their peace work?

> *"It is best to include religion in the struggle for peace."* —Muslim male

> ***Finding 8***: CIRCA has established a balance between the spiritual, cognitive, and practical motives for engaging in IRA, enabling participants to find a place fitting their motivation, whatever that might be.

Rationale

In attempt to generate discussion about people's understanding of the religious dimensions of their peace work, we asked them first to describe their peace work and then what motivated them to work for peace.

We asked CIRCA participants, "How would you describe your peace work?" Their responses are grouped into five categories: development, bringing people together, working on inner peace, awareness-raising, and other. The following table illustrates the different ways they referred to their involvement/practice.

Table H. Participant's descriptions of their peace work

| Development	Bringing people together
• There is development. • What is harvested is shared equally. • Empower us economically.	• Bring us together. • Project supported by interfaith that has brought community together. • Bringing communities together. • God wants us to live together in peace.
Inner peace	**Other**
• You need to control yourself and, as a religious leader, to lean on your faith. • My peace work requires me to have peace first so that I can share it with others.	• There is no fighting.
Awareness-raising	
• Because I am an imam, I try to give my community spiritual teaching in Islam about peace. That is my motto, and what the Quran wants and what I follow. • My involvement in peace issues helps people to understand peace is important.	

The dimensions of interreligious action outlined in the CIRCA training manual jibe well with the different motives CIRCA participants described. Within the spiritual dimension, people mentioned being called and motivated by their faith. In the cognitive dimension, people were motivated by the prospect of peace itself and an interest in preserving good relations between all people. Others mentioned more practical motives, including helping people, achieving specific development goals, and being motivated to follow up on their prior studies.

Motives may not be so singular or one-dimensional. Several respondents lumped different motives together, only to have the analyst pull them apart and assign different segments to their respective categories. What are the values behind the drive to bring people together? How do spiritual motives shape or influence people's decision to engage in interreligious action? Why is peace held in such esteem? How do people come to understand water as peace? What synergies exist between the spiritual, cognitive, and practical motives?

The spiritual dimensions of interreligious action were more fully explored and taken up in the CIRCA training. Some saw religion as a platform, or a communication and interaction channel, such as joint celebrations of cultural rites of passage and holidays. Knowledge of the other's religion enabled participants to engage and affirm the other. The connector projects, on the other hand, were consumed with the practical dimensions of generic project implementation challenges, where interreligious collaboration happened along the way. Both activities used the shared values in Christian/Islamic religious teachings to promote peace.

Demonstrated collaboration among leaders of different faiths sent both cognitive and practical signals in the communities they visited, legitimizing the other and authorizing, if not promoting, collaboration across different religions.

Illustration B. Motivation concept map
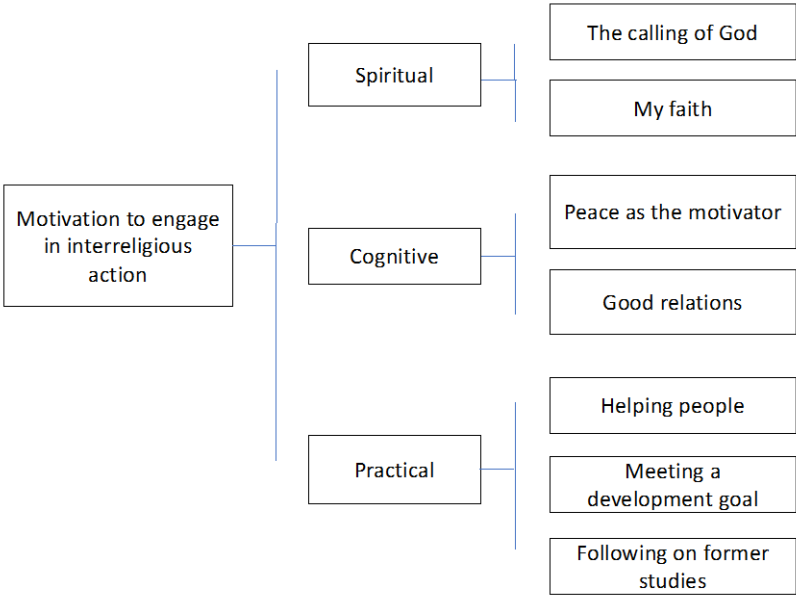
Implications

By being open to the spiritual, cognitive, and practical aspects of IRA, this allowed people to self-select their own motives for engagement. This is not to imply that one size fits all. Clearly, the mix in the CIRCA training was spiritually thicker, while the connector projects accented the practical. And still everyone managed to get under the same tent.

Conclusions

Factors Influencing Effectiveness

The enabling and constraining factors that have come up over the course of the evaluation are listed below in Table F. These stem from the different understandings of success and issues raised in the interviews, as well as discussions during the workshops, and they are presented as a composite rather than lessons specific to each country.

Table I. Factors influencing IRA

	Enabling factors	Constraining factors
Within the program's sphere of influence	Leadership • Permission from religious leaders • Legitimization by local authorities • Modeling–interreligious collaboration modeled at all levels Partnership • Partnerships among FBOs from different faiths • Focus on shared religious values rather than dogma or theology • Effective interreligious communication • Multi-skilled, well-trained human resources • Financial support Good practices • Rightsizing—matching the skill sets/ capacity to the severity of the conflict • Transparency • Local ownership of CPs • Space for spiritual, cognitive, and practical dimensions	Dealing with the status quo • Institutional and cultural constraints restricting women's participants • Spoilers[12] such as hardliners Scarcity of skilled personnel • Takes two skill sets: one for interreligious engagement and another for the practical action Mindsets • Thinking of one faith as superior to the others • Fear of conversion • Belief that engagement with other makes one a bad member of their own faith NGO modus operandi • Implementation headaches from connector projects • Thinking in terms of projects, instead of windows of opportunities • Many trainees had full-time jobs and oversight of CPs represented a considerable burden to some
The broader environment	• Space for FBOs and NGOs to operate	• Insufficient security to access • Spoilers including hardliners • Incidents in Niger reacting to Charlie Hebdo • Large geographic areas uncovered • Rapid staff turnover in the FBO and NGO spheres

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[12] Spoilers are conflict stakeholders, such as war profiteers, who do not want to see an end to violence, exploitation, or corruption. Often, they are willing to sabotage or derail peacebuilding initiative to protect their interests.

Taken as a whole, these factors represent a lot of considerations with which program designers and implementers will have to contend. Permission, legitimization, and modeling all require high-level religious leaders to act. Partners need to be strategic and effective, and observe good practices in working on issues of faith, communication, and conflict transformation.

Implementers will also need to contend with some formidable constraining factors. These include the inertia of the status quo in terms of isolation and ignorance. Closed mindsets often need to be addressed early on for IRA to advance. Insufficient security, spoilers, NGO ways of working, rapid staff turnover, and external influences can all slow, if not derail, IRA.

With a few notable exceptions, CIRCA managed to overcome the constraints and integrate various enabling factors. It is worth noting that at least two CPs were reinforced by recent or concurrent peacebuilding programming: Dialogue in Action Project II in Kenya and TA'ALA in Egypt.

Site selections helped control other variables that might have adversely affected the program. The program stayed with the Abrahamic faiths, creating an opening for Traditionalist religious leaders in Kenya. Even with the proximity to armed actors in Maiduguri, Nigeria, and AOSK's early efforts in Garissa, Kenya, at the time of the program, religion was neither the cause of conflict, nor was it being appropriated for violent political purposes at the sites chosen. The sites chosen certainly stood to benefit from peacebuilding. CIRCA remains to be fully tested in a climate of overt physical violence and highly elevated religious tensions, such as Central African Republic.

Significance of the program

The IRA training and practical experiences offered by CIRCA were significant. The curriculum alone may be of value to many for years to come. The training workshops opened space for participants to explore the spiritual and cognitive dimension of IRA. The workshops not only increased understanding of the faith of the other, they also pushed participants to examine the role of peace in their own faith. This deeper, richer understanding fueled personal transformation, a necessary precursor to working with one's organization or facilitating in the community.

The group of CIRCA trainees only came together for the trainings. Some knew each other from other endeavors, and some were peers from the same areas. They are not a group that has planned to have ongoing gatherings after the program, if for no other reason than the associated costs. The significance of the training and capacity-building portions of the program depends largely on whatever niche or opportunity CIRCA trainees can create within their own organizations.

The significance of the connector projects will depend on how long people see the project as testimony of what different faith groups working together can accomplish. It will also depend on whether or not they can build on their experience to use IR collaboration to address emergent needs and conflicts.

In designing the evaluation, a rubric was developed to assist in determining the significance of the program. It consisted of a 6-point scale of the success areas laid out in the original proposal: peaceful coexistence, effective interfaith action, learning and catalyzing networks and platforms. Initially, the evaluator was to determine the rubric rankings for the countries visited, leaving out half the group. To have at least one means of looking at all six countries as one program, completion of the rubric shifted

from the evaluator to the CIRCA trainees in each country becoming, in effect, a self-appraisal. The rankings were discussed and agreed upon in the CIRCA trainee workshops.

Table J: Degree of achievement of criteria for success

Criteria for success	Degree of Achievement				
	No change	*Marginal improvements*	*Significant improvements*	*Catalytic influence*	*Institution-alization*
Peaceful coexistence		Egypt	Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Niger		
Effective interreligious action		Egypt	Nigeria, Tanzania	Kenya, Niger	Uganda
Learning		Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya	Nigeria, Egypt	Niger	
Catalyzes networks/ platforms		Niger, Egypt	Nigeria	Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya	

Peaceful coexistence is one of the criteria for success and is a goal-level change. In five countries, CIRCA trainees report significant improvements in Muslim/Christian relationships among direct participants in the overall program. Data from the interviews and change stories further validate this conclusion.

Effective interreligious action is a criterion for success and is closely aligned with both CIRCA's strategic objectives. Kenya and Niger maintain that areas external to and independent of the project-initiated interreligious actions based on CIRCA's experience. Here, the rubric focuses on IRA in addition to or beyond CIRCA. For Niger, that included the Maradi engagement with the Ministry for Religious Affairs. Nigeria cites multiple IRAs enjoying widespread support among both communities. Egypt reports isolated, one-off IRA in addition to CIRCA.

It terms of catalyzing networks and platforms, things get a little murky. Kenya reports involvement in networks and platforms that are linked to and working beyond the reach of the program. Given that CICC is an umbrella of membership organizations, these networks and platforms predate and operate independently from CIRCA, making it hard to identify CIRCA's contribution. Even if we leave the designation of catalytic influence, it is not something that has improved over the course of the project. Niger and Egypt report that networks they are associated with have expanded the types of issues they deal with to include IRA.

In Uganda, the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) and the Nile Dialogue Platform (NDP) had worked together previously, and over the course of CIRCA, their relationship grew to the point where UJCC invited NDP to join them in several national-level fora. These were not connected to CIRCA per se, but were independent efforts to bring IR collaboration into other fora. They have worked on a forum

advocating for parliament to adopt of policies on issues of biotechnology and small arms and light weapons. They have also collaborated with the Ministry of Education on a comprehensive sexuality curriculum. This sort of "friending" or inviting another IR actor into an existing forum is another example of IRA not based on projects.

The learning criteria in the rubric focuses on the content and application of lessons learned. Of the four criteria of success, this seems to be the weakest for CIRCA as a whole, but still positive. Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya report that their learning has focused primarily on implementation issues. The Kenya CIRCA participant interviews support this in that their learning focused on how to do things and what to do, rather than exploring how change happens.

The program is most significant where it has touched those most directly involved—community CP committee members and CIRCA trainees. The relational changes reported are testimony to the program's effectiveness in promoting peaceful coexistence. Greater clarity and intentionality on how the program catalyzes network and platforms—and how organizational capacities deepen—will both need to be part of any future design.

Recommendations

Although CIRCA is drawing to a close, CRS requested recommendations should others wish to engage in similar programming. The following recommendations are derived from the findings, and their implications and divided into two groups.

Strategic Recommendations

- Maintain high-level public modeling of interreligious collaboration as an entry point and for reinforcing the value of IRA as needed.
- Continue to pair leaders who carry authority and convening power with activists who operate with dexterity when selecting CIRCA trainees, as was done in Niger.
- Build in a strategy for including state actors relevant to the conflict being addressed.
- Conduct a conflict analysis that can be used to link local action with societal concerns.
- Insist on the inclusion of women leaders who are religious and promote them as ideal candidates for the CIRCA training.

Operational Recommendations

- Implement CPs in program areas already covered by the host organization so that there are greater chances of continuation and more opportunities to interest non-participants in integrating IRA into their other activities, thereby expanding the realm of CIRCA's influence.
- Explore options for dealing with structural violence in addition to the work on individual and relational change.
- Anticipate participants wanting to offer the same training to colleagues. Offer a training of trainers to enable internal step-down training.
- Make program theories of change user-friendly and encourage staff to explore them early on.
- Mainstream gender in the CIRCA training manual.

- Provide opportunities for staff and participants to develop their own evaluation rubrics early in the program.
- Preserve the programmatic space for diverse spiritual, cognitive, and practical motives to coexist.
- Complement the training and practice experienced by a few organizational representatives with strategies to strengthen organizational capacity for IRA.

Prospects for a Second Phase

The evaluation is, in part, to serve as an input into the design of a second phase. Although not explicitly required in the evaluation terms of references, discussions with CRS raised the possibility of including in the report a section on the prospects for Phase II of CIRCA. The approach here is exploratory not prescriptive. The general orientation from CRS is to go deeper rather than broader.

Processes

Formal, written conflict analysis has not been taken up in earnest by the CIRCA partners, including CRS. It was routinely ranked as the weakest competency in the mini-survey. A joint conflict analysis in each participating Phase II country could extend the playing field beyond community action to national and regional engagements.

CIRCA could shift its dialogue orientation toward peacebuilding dialogue. Neufeldt [13] describes three types of dialogue: theological or interfaith dialogue, political dialogue, and peacebuilding dialogue. Interfaith dialogue, like that found in CIRCA, is "primarily an opportunity for exchange and understanding between clergy, lay religious leaders and theologians."

The purposes behind political dialogue include: producing social coexistence, increasing the legitimacy of a political process and actors, and expanding the options for political processes. Peacebuilding dialogue integrates interfaith and political dialogue. It serves to change attitudes and perceptions of the "other," including eliminating negative stereotypes and developing mutual understanding and respect.

Dimension of Change

The vast majority of change stories heard over the course of the evaluation were at the individual and relational levels. Thorough conflict analyses usually identify structures or institutions that are either part of the problem and/or part of the solution.

Themes

CIRCA might consider taking on a specific theme to which interreligious action could be applied. Instead of localized community development themes characteristic of Phase I, CIRCA might consider broader themes of general interest (e.g., justice, reconciliation, equity, protection, etc.).

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[13] Neufeldt, Reina C. "Interfaith Dialogue: Assessing Theories of Change," *Peace & Change,* Vol. 36: No. 3 (July 2011).

Justice issues extend beyond criminal justice and can be found in many types of conflicts as drivers or triggers. Different understandings stem from secular/religious, customary/statutory, and cross-cultural interpretations about how justice is exercised. The challenge here is to identify an issue within the field of justice that is or will be within CIRCA's capacity to address and important enough to merit the investment.

Another option is to begin with research as the action. For example, consider the question raised by Omer[14], "How does religion relate to the structural and cultural forms of violence (local and trans-locally)?" Or conversely, "How does religion address structural cultural violence?"

Expanding the Religious Who

There is no doubt that religious leaders needed and have valued their involvement with CIRCA. Clerics are an important part of most religious institutions, but represent a small number of the faithful. There are many more religious people who, although they may not be qualified to lead certain rituals or formalities, have religious credibility, if not authority, and who can easy learn the ins and outs of interreligious action. This is one reason why FOMWAN and AOSK were such strategic partners.

Some programs working with religious leaders have been able to involve women leaders who are religious. This may still meet resistance from the institutional leaders.

Engaging State Actors and Politicians

In several places, participants noticed the absence of state actors in the program. In Kenya, there was some reluctance to engage politicians. "If politicians get involved, they overpower the religious leaders and they take over," lamented one CIRCA trainee. In Konni, Niger, all local state bodies and religious groups were well acquainted with the program. Perhaps the lesson from Konni is to involve people from all sides so that no one can claim what everyone already understands to be "of the community."

The voices for advocacy among the CIRCA participants were audible, even if few in number, right from the beginning of the program. As explained in the baseline, respondents noted "structural injustices that are present in the community which predispose communities to conflict escalation (to violence)." That sentiment persists, as we heard during the final evaluation. "We need to be engaging the government as much as the people," explained one participant.

Engagement with state and parastatal agencies and initiatives may be worth exploring. Here, the idea is not to support those agencies, but rather help faith-based actors fully engage in and influence these agencies. For example, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Niger has started an interreligious dialogue.

Structures

Partner organizations are perhaps the low-hanging fruit here because they are known and are generally open to improving their work or deepening their capacity. Because they are known, organizational

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[14] Omer, Atalia, Scott Appleby, and David Little, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2015

development needs assessments, even when done, don't get much attention. Much of the organizational development capacity building envisioned in the CIRCA proposal did not happen, in part due to a lack of understanding about needs and the lack of activities that could address those needs. Furthermore, strengthening the capacities of individual religious leaders, without developing a corresponding openness in their religious institutions, is unlikely to foster a supportive environment or result in much change.

Process structures, such as interreligious councils, might represent an important next step for CIRCA. Interreligious councils, such as CICC, are process structures that apply interreligious action to conflict analysis, early intervention, and dispute-resolution services. IRCs range from the grassroots to formal, high-profile national bodies. At the local level, IRCs may be known as peace *shuras*, reconciliation councils, peace committees, or elders' councils. These already exist in several countries where CIRCA operates.

Many IRCs, whether by design or necessity, are small, independent process structures. Effective IRCs have viable visions and directions, lean and expandable organizational infrastructure, and are dynamic in employing a variety of processes and interventions in response to their changing contexts[15] .

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[15] Rogers, Mark, Tom Bamat, and Julie Ideh, eds.. *Pursuing Just Peace: An Overview and Case Studies for Faith-Based Peacebuilders.* Baltimore, MD: Catholic Relief Services, 2008.

Appendix A. Evaluation Rubric

Criteria for success	Degree of Achievement					
	Counter-productive	*No change*	*Marginal improvements*	*Significant improvements*	*Catalytic influence*	*Institutionalization*
Peaceful coexistence	Muslim/Christian relationships deteriorate	Muslim/Christian relationships remain unchanged from the beginning of the project	Limited improvements in local Christian/ Muslim relationships	Substantive improvements in Christian/Muslim relations among direct participants	Substantives improvements in Muslim/Christian relationships influenced by, but external to, the project	Structural impediments to peaceful coexistence addressed
Effective interreligious action	Further entrenches interreligious animosity	No new interreligious actions beyond CIRCA	Isolated one-off interreligious action in addition to CIRCA	Multiple interreligious actions enjoy widespread local support among both communities	Areas external to and independent of the project area initiate interreligious actions based on CIRCA experience	New interreligious actions institutionalized
Learning	Poor implementation mistaken for a design flaw	Lessons reinforces existing knowledge	Learning focused on implementation	Learning centered on localized strategies and theories of change	Learning being incorporated to local and national peacebuilding program designs	Strategic learning transferable to the larger field of religious peacebuilding
Catalyzes networks/ platforms	Existing networks lose ground	Status of existing networks and platforms unchanged	Networks/platforms expand types of issues they deal with to include interreligious action	Network/platforms effectively leverage influence within their immediate sphere of influence	Networks and platforms linked to and working with others beyond the reach of the project	Formal linkages to international platforms and networks addressing interreligious action

Appendix B. People with Whom We Spoke

Initially interlocutors gave their consent for the report to include their names in the appendix of the report, but not attribute specific quotes to any individuals. As explained to the interlocutors at the time consent was given, the report was to be shared among partners, within CRS and with its donors. CRS subsequently elected to share the report more widely than what was anticipated at the time the initial consent was obtained. In order to do this, ideally CRS would have returned to all the interested parties and obtained their consent for a broader more public distribution. This option represents a substantial logistical challenge.

A less desirable alternative is to remove the list of names from the report. This option fails to appreciate the time and information provided by a wide range of authorities and people with first-hand knowledge of the project. It also reduces somewhat the credibility of the data, findings and the overall evaluation. CRS elected to pursue this option.

Table K gives a sense of the number of people we with whom we spoke and their roles either in the community or in the project.

Table K. Numbers of people with whom we spoke

Type of interlocutor	Locations visited by external evaluator			Other locations		
	Niger	*Kenya*	*Nigeria*	*Egypt*	*Tanzania*	*Uganda*
Authorities	5	2	2	0	0	0
CICRA trainees	17	11	10	9	10	10
CP leadership	Youth CP 4 Women CP 5	8	Sokoto 11 Kano 3	0	0	0
CP Focus group participants	Youth CP 20 Women CP 39	8	Sokoto 11 Kano 10	0	0	0
CRS staff	2	1	2	0	0	0
Other	0	2	0	0	0	0
*Total**	83	24	35	9	10	10

*CP leadership participated in interviews and focus groups and hence are not counted twice in the total

Appendix C. Evaluation Questions and Findings at a Glance

Evaluation questions	Evaluation findings
Effectiveness	
EQ 1: To what extent have partners effectively supported Muslim and Christian leaders, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities?	*Finding 1*: Across the four connector projects visited, there was a wide range of types of support. CIRCA trainees identified more pastoral roles, whereas CP participants had a more practical, nuts-and-bolts perspective on the support received during the connector project.
EQ 2: To what extent have partner organizations more effectively engaged in interreligious development and peace initiatives?	*Finding 2*: Partner organizations were able to engage more effectively in IRA through new partnerships with faith-based organizations from other religions, enhanced confidence in being able to engage effectively with the other out of a deeper understanding of their faith, and increased knowledge of and skills in facilitation and communication.
EQ 3: To what extent have CRS partners developed/strengthened organizational strategies for interreligious engagement?	*Finding 3*: CIRCA has had little influence over broad organizational strategies for IRA in the participating organizations. Instead, its influence focused on individual uptake of IRA processes, skills, and content.
Learning	
EQ 4: How valid was CIRCA's theory of change?	*Finding 4*: The theory of change contains incomplete results chains and outcomes unsupported by activities. It is also not user-friendly.
EQ 5: What additional lessons can be drawn from the CIRCA experience to enhance interreligious—specifically Muslim-Christian—social cohesion efforts in the program areas?	*Finding 5:* Effective IRA requires personal preparation and accurate, up-to-date information about the people, issues, conflicts, culture, and religion of key stakeholders. It also requires strategic choices, transparency, and patience.
EQ 6: What were the gender dynamics at play in the CIRCA project, and how did the project respond to these?	*Finding 6*: The program considered gender dynamics at key moments and involved more women in the connector projects than in the CIRCA training.
EQ 7: How do the participating partners understand the success or effectiveness of their peace work?	*Finding 7*: Understandings of success were split, with one camp focused on how work was done (e.g., through interreligious collaboration), and the other camp focused on achieving the central development action in the connector projects (e.g., finding water).
EQ 8: How do the participating partners understand the religious dimension of their peace work?	*Finding 8:* CIRCA has established a balance between the spiritual, cognitive and practical motives for engaging in IRA, enabling participants to find a place fitting their motivation, whatever that might be.

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