

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

African Council of Religious Leaders Religions for Peace

Different Faiths, Common Action



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As leaders representing diverse faith traditions, we are deeply concerned about the global polycrisis that is affecting our world today. This crisis, characterized by a combination of multiple challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, armed conflicts, and the COVID-19 pandemic, is having a severe impact on the people of Africa.

In Africa, the effects of the polycrisis are particularly acute. Climate change is leading to more frequent and severe droughts, floods, and other natural disasters, threatening the livelihoods of millions. Economic inequality is widening, with many people struggling to meet their basic needs. Armed conflicts continue to ravage certain regions, causing immense suffering and displacement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, placing additional strain on fragile health systems and economies. It has also highlighted the inequalities in access to healthcare and the disproportionate impact of the crisis on marginalized communities.

The Most Reverend Dr Albert Chama As religious leaders, we call for urgent action to address the global polycrisis and its impact in Africa. We urge governments, international organizations, and all people of goodwill to work together in solidarity to:

- 1. Mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting sustainable development, and supporting adaptation efforts in vulnerable communities.
- 2. Address economic inequality by implementing policies that promote inclusive growth, reduce poverty, and ensure access to basic services for all.
- 3. Resolve armed conflicts through dialogue, reconciliation, and respect for human rights, and support efforts to build peace and stability in affected regions.
- 4. Strengthen healthcare systems and ensure equitable access to vaccines and treatments for COVID-19 and other diseases.

In this time of crisis, let us draw inspiration from our shared values of compassion, love, solidarity, and justice. Let us work together as brothers and sisters, across religious and cultural divides, to build a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world for all. We need to draw strength from these shared values but also the immence social assests that the religious communities posessess to make an impact on the continent

May peace and blessings be upon you all.



### Message from the Secretary General's Desk

My esteemed colleagues and partners,

As we look back on the activities and achievements of the African Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace in the year 2023, we are filled with gratitude and inspiration. Throughout the year, our regional network of religious communities has continued to work tirelessly towards our shared vision of peace and reconciliation.

In 2023, we embarked on numerous initiatives aimed at fostering interfaith dialogue, strengthening NIRCs networks, and advancing peacebuilding efforts in regions affected by conflict. Our grassroots initiatives empowered local religious leaders and communities to become agents of positive change, fostering understanding and cooperation among diverse faith traditions. Helping vulnerable communities, particularly those that face conflict and humanitarian catastrophe, navigate the mutually reinforcing shocks of violence, inflation, food insecurity, climate change, and the lingering effects of the pandemic is more pressing, and has remained at the core of ACRL – RfP engagement.

One of the highlights of the year was the successful implementation of our peacebuilding projects in conflict-affected areas, as exemplified by the Trauma Healing initiative in South Sudan. Trauma healing is a crucial aspect of recovery and peacebuilding in South Sudan, a country that has experienced decades of conflict and violence manifest in civil war, ethnic violence, and displacement.

These experiences have left many individuals and communities deeply traumatized. The impact of trauma can have profound

effects on individuals, families, and communities. It can lead to mental health issues, such as Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, and can also impact physical health and social relationships. ACRL – RfP adopted a comprehensive approach that addresses the psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of trauma. This included counseling, support groups, traditional healing practices, and community-based interventions.

Additionally, our advocacy efforts on behalf of marginalized communities and vulnerable populations have continued to make a meaningful impact. Whether addressing issues of poverty, displacement, or environmental degradation, ACRL – RfP has been at the forefront of promoting justice and human dignity.

The projects direct costs to overall expenditure, programme expenses ratio, indicates that the project spent less of its resources on operating costs and hence pointing to higher levels of efficiency.

In the vibrant tapestry of Africa, ACRL - RfP has sought to weave together the threads of shared wellbeing. Through our diverse faiths and cultures, we recognize that true prosperity arises when every individual, every community, flourishes. Let us continue to nurture a collective spirit of care and support, ensuring that no one is left behind. Let us cultivate environments where every person can thrive, where the richness of our heritage and the promise of our future intertwine. Together, we will nurture societies that celebrate difference and empower every individual to contribute their unique gifts.

With hearts open and hands extended, let us continue to embrace the call to service and compassion. Inspired by the teachings of our faiths, let us reach out to uplift the vulnerable, heal the wounded, and build a foundation of love and solidarity. Let our actions speak volumes as we walk the path of service together, lighting the way for a brighter tomorrow.

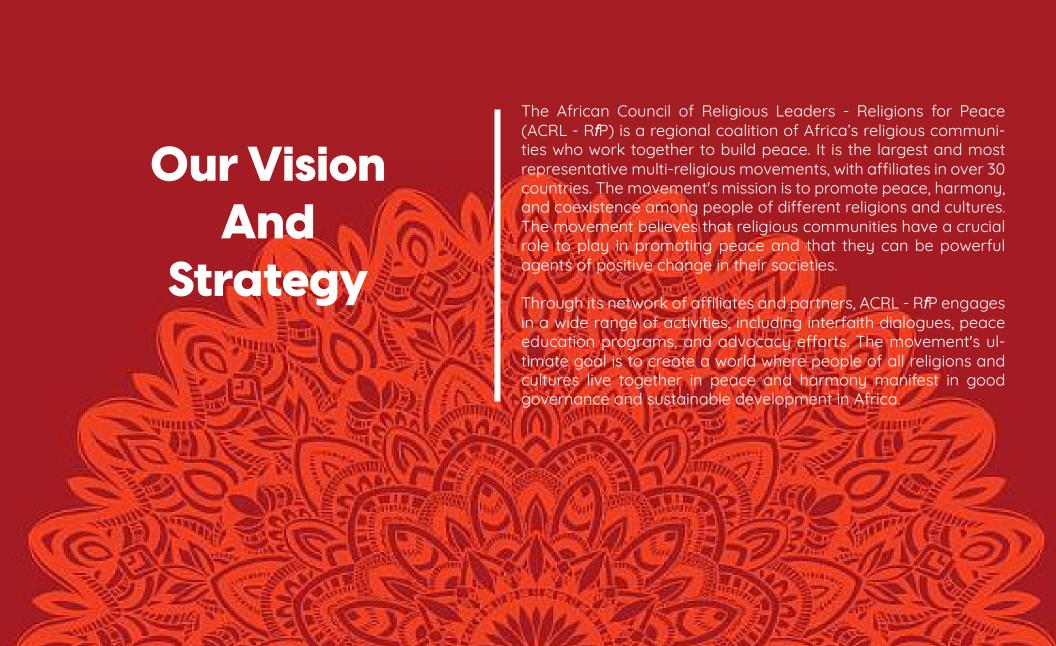
Together, let us uphold these key statements as pillars of our African interfaith organization, forging a path towards a future where shared wellbeing, flowering societies, peace, and compassion reign supreme.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment and dedication to the work of ACRL - RfP. May we continue to strive towards our shared goals with compassion, humility, and perseverance.

With warm regards,

Dr. Francis K. Kuria Secretary General





### Mission

Mobilising religious leaders and their communities to build peaceful, just, hopeful and harmonious societies in Africa.

#### Vision

Sustainable peace and justice in Africa.

### Strategy

ACRL - RfP has been working closely with Religions for Peace International through National Interreligious Councils (NIRCs) and their respective networks to enhance their service delivery and build more capable, responsive interfaith structures with a focus on the following strategic objectives:

- 1. Transforming conflicts and developing a culture of peace;
- 2. Promoting just and harmonious societies;
- 3. Nurture the earth and support sustainable development;
- 4. Institutional Strengthening.

#### Value statements

- 1. Love and inclusiveness we are unreservedly concerned with the spiritual and wholesome wellbeing of all humans as a demonstration of love.
- 2. Mutual respect and dignity we recognise that all human beings have equal potential, with an innate right to be respected.
- 3.Integrity and stewardship we are committed to ensuring that our actions adhere to our moral and ethical principles.
- 4.Innovation and excellence we constantly seek to innovate and uphold excellence in all our endeavours.
- 5.Accountability we are fully accountable to all our stakeholders by serving as stewards of all resources.



### **Our Reach**

- Benin
- Botswana
- Burking Faso
- Comoros (Working Group)
- Cameroon
- Cote d'Ivoire
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Djibouti (Working Group)
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Madagascar
- Malawi (Public Affairs Committee)

- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- Reunion
- Rwanda
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Kwazulu-Natal
- South Africa
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe
- Eswatini

## Transform Conflict & Develop a Culture of Peace



Transforming conflicts and developing a culture of peace are Healing from trauma is a multifaceted process that involves adessential for promoting human well-being, fostering sustainable dressing the deep scars left by years of conflict, displacement, development, and building a more just and equitable society for present and future generations.

Healing from trauma is a multifaceted process that involves aderessing the deep scars left by years of conflict, displacement, and violence. Some of the considerations that ACRL – RfP focused on are ground; psuchosocial support; cultural context; communications.

In 2023, the Peace Program comprehensive initiative encompassed various thematic areas, including Trauma Healing and Reconciliation trainings and workshops, overcoming marginalization and implementation of disarmament efforts nationally and globally.

Healing from trauma is a multifaceted process that involves addressing the deep scars left by years of conflict, displacement, and violence. Some of the considerations that ACRL – RfP focused on are around: psychosocial support; cultural context; community reconciliation; capacity building and education and awareness. By adopting a holistic and culturally sensitive approach, combined with efforts to address underlying causes of conflict, trauma healing in South Sudan can contribute to rebuilding communities and fostering sustainable peace.

## Trauma Healing Reconciliation: Navigating Exclusion through National Dialogue – South Sudan

ACRL-RfP organized a transformative 2-day workshop on 30th and 31st August 2023 in Juba, South Sudan bringing together 30 religious leaders from diverse faith communities, including women and youth, to deliberate on their roles in shaping South Sudan's future. Organized in collaboration with the Inter Religious Council of South Sudan (IRC-SS), and support from Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) Regional Peace Program (RPP), the workshop aimed to harness the potential of religious leaders as drivers of



2-day workshop in Juba, South Sudan. under the theme "South Sudan: Our Land, Our Hope".

peace, development, and unity in a nation marked by cultural diversity and historical complexities.

Centered around the theme of "South Sudan: Our Land, Our Hope," the workshop provided a platform for participants to share personal stories, and reconnect with their past and childhood, a time when their country flourished in its rich multicultural, hospitable, and resource-rich nature.

During the 2 days, discussions mainly revolved the Revitalized



A transformative 2-day workshop in Juba, South Sudan. under the theme "South Sudan: Our Land, Our Hope".

Peace Agreement and the National Dialogue process with an emphasis of the transition intricacies like the Revitalized Agreement for Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), and opportunities for engagement where religious leaders could aid in the wider peace endeavor as a process of reconciliation.

The workshop concluded with a consensus to unite and formally establish the Inter-Religious Council of South Sudan, a key milestone and a platform that religious leaders can use to engage with other stakeholders including the government, recognizing their potential to contribute significantly to South Sudan's overall peace and sustainable development.

### **Tombura Insider Reconciliation Training**

The influx of refugees from Sudan to South Sudan, mainly through the Upper Nile Region, continues to flow, and unfortunately, instead of finding safety, the refugees are facing new problems as they become targets by the locals in SSD, and their living conditions turn out to be worse than in Sudan. The security situation in Juba is relatively OK, but in other parts of SSD, there are still attacks and robberies, making it dangerous to travel by road. The road network in South Sudan wanting allowing access to only a few areas. In Malakal/Upper Nile, the security situation has improved thanks to the efforts of the Mayor of Malakal in collaboration with security forces.

In collaboration with the Catholic Diocese of Tombura and Yambiu, ACRL- RfP facilitated a Reconciliation Training for Sixty (60) religious and laities. Training focused on Living together beneficially, and climaxed with centinery celebrations which brought more than 3000 faithfuls, including 200 IDPs.

ACRL also visited a refugee camp in Malakal hosting refugees from Sudan

The results were encouraging, and interest in learning more is evident.

The project is in its second year of implementation. Building on the previous work, the needs assessment and training masters trainers of trainers. The year began with accompanying the ToTs to train Insider reconcilers in their regions and cascading the message to various parts of the regions. This then gave rise to gaining experience, which opened the door for peer learning and comparing notes. Lessons from practice have been picked up and field experiences shared. Follow-up and community meetings happened at Malakal in the Upper Nile region and Juba in the Greater Equatoria region.



Catholic Diocese of Tombura ACRL-RfP facilitated a Reconciliation Training for Sixty (60) religious and laities



Community members Assemblying after training

# Overcoming Marginalization and Exclusion through Freedom of Religion and Belief - Ethiopia

In Collaboration with EIFDDA, we co-organized a 2-day workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focusing on tackling marginalization and exclusion. The objective of the workshop was on Addressing exclusion and Marginalization in Ethiopia, through Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) and National Dialogue. The transformative workshop, brought together 30 Faith actors including women, youth and civil society representatives, and aimed to sensitize religious leaders on understanding exclusion and the context of Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) in Ethiopia. Participants delved into discussions regarding the historical, legal, and social landscape of religious actors, highlighting the importance of addressing exclusion and promoting FoRB to cultivate a more inclusive and peaceful society.

Participants also explored the role of National Dialogue in overcoming exclusion and fostering inclusion within their communities. Discussions revolved around the National Dialogue process and its various phases, with a specific emphasis on the opportunities available for religious leaderts and the role that they can play in shaping the National agenda and ensuring that the process is transparent and inclusive.



workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focusing on tackling marginalization and exclusion.

# Addressing Marginalization and Social Exclusion Issues in Tanzania

In association with the Inter-Religious Council of Peace-Tanzania (IRCPT), we held a two-day workshop addressing marginalization and social exclusion among religious leaders. Bringing together 15 key religious figures, including women and youth, the workshop delved into the impact of marginalization on human rights and social inclusion.

The sessions explored the multifaceted nature of marginalization, from geographical to religious dimensions. A focal point was the challenge of street children in Tanzania, with proposed solutions like tailored educational programs and legal reforms. Overall, the workshop underscored the importance of collective action to combat marginalization in Tanzania.



Workshop for Senor Religious Leaders, including women of Faith and Interfaith Youth leaders in Tanzania

# Advancing Nuclear Disarmament: Regional Collaboration and Faith-Based Advocacy

This year has marked a significant stride in Africa's commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, with several African nations pledging to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Spearheading this movement was a landmark regional consultative forum in Pretoria, South Africa, co-hosted by the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Representatives from 37 African Member States, the African Union (AU), and civil society organizations convened to reinforce their dedication to the TPNW and strategize for increased regional membership.

The forum showcased the widespread support for the TPNW across diverse sectors, with participants expressing readiness to ratify the treaty by the second Meeting of State Parties in November 2023. Africa's collective commitment aligns seamlessly with the work of ICAN, the recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, and underscores the continent's pivotal role in advancing global disarmament efforts. Contributing to this cause is the African Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace (ACRL-RfP), a member of ICAN's International Steering Group, which continues to advocate tirelessly for nuclear disarmament.

In parallel, ACRL-RfP has been instrumental in amplifying re-

ligious voices in critical international platforms, such as the 23rd World Congress of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) in Mombasa, Kenya. At this congress, religious leaders emphasized the interconnected threats posed by nuclear weapons, health crises, and climate change, culminating in the "Mombasa Appeal." This declaration urged immediate ceasefires in conflict zones and the complete renunciation of nuclear weapons by all nuclear-armed states, echoing the moral imperative outlined in the "Nairobi Declaration."

In Kenya, ACRL-RfP facilitated an interministerial stakeholder's forum in partnership with ICAN, aiming to bolster understanding of the TPNW and chart a course for potential signing and accession. Despite Kenya's yet-to-be-signed status, the nation has consistently supported nuclear weapon bans at global and regional levels, showcasing its firm commitment to disarmament. ACRL-RfP's engagement with key government stakeholder's underscores Kenya's dedication to this cause and highlights the importance of collaborative efforts in advancing nuclear disarmament agendas.



Session moderation on TPNW in Nairobi, Kenya

# Aft an Regional Seminary or the Treatment of the State of

Group Photo of Member states Parties on regional consultative forum held in Pretoria, South Africa, co-hosted by the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation DIR-CO, ICAN, and ICRC

Moreover, ACRL-RfP's participation in the commemoration of the 14th Anniversary of the Treaty of Pelindaba in Nairobi underscored the critical role African nations play in global nuclear disarmament. Through knowledge sharing and engagement, stakeholders emphasized the alignment of African states with international norms for a safer world.

At the Second Meeting of State Parties to the TPNW in New York City, ACRL-RfP, in collaboration with Religions for Peace International, convened a Side Event to explore the role of faith actors in universalizing the TPNW. Themed "The Role of Strategic Partnership between Faith Actors and ICAN in Universalizing the TPNW for Sustainable Peace," the event underscored the moral and ethical imperatives driving nuclear disarmament advocacy.

By fostering interfaith collaboration and raising public awareness, faith communities are playing a pivotal role in reshaping the narrative on nuclear weapons. Through strategic partnerships and collective action, they are driving forward the agenda for nuclear disarmament, paving the way for a more peaceful and just future for all.

# 9th East Africa Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the IHL and Convention by ICRC

ACRL-RfP attended the 9th East Africa Regional Seminar on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which brought together government representatives from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, South Africa, and Djibouti, as well as representatives from The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Kenya Red Cross. In addition to reviewing regional cooperation on the effective implementation of IHL, the meeting also reviewed progress toward ratification/ accession to relevant IHL treaties, including the TPNW



Presentation of an ICAN badge to an Ambassador during Commemoration of the Pelindaba Treaty in partnership with the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE)

### **Promoting Just & Harmonious Societies**



By adopting these approaches, individuals, communities, governments, and organizations can contribute to building more just, peaceful, and harmonious societies for all and opportune the taking of concrete actions to address underlying inequalities and injustices, allowing society to edge closer to achieving greater harmony, fairness, and inclusivity for all their members.

ACRL – RfP recognizes the important role that religions can play in building more just and harmonious societies. In 2023 through these efforts, ACRL – RfP continued to play a vital role in promoting just and harmonious societies, demonstrating the positive impact that religious communities can have in building a more peaceful world.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies as a precursor for sustainable development. This is also crucial for just and harmonious societies that provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. This is enhanced by: advancing peacebuilding efforts; ensuring access to justice; promoting human rights; building inclusive institutions; fostering dialogue and reconciliation; empowering marginalized communities; addressing inequalities; and supporting sustainable development, among many other enablers.



# Building Bridges for Peace: Advocacy and Multi-Religious Engagement for Peacebuilding and Inclusion

ACRL-RfP convened 2 workshops for religious leaders in Abuja, Nigeria and Bamako, Mali respectively titled "Building Bridges for Peace: Advocacy and Multi-Religious Engagement for Peacebuilding and Inclusion", supported by Mensen met een Missie under the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) initiative.





The 2 workshops, organized in collaboration with the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) and Inter-Religious Council of Mali respectively, aimed to analyze the challenges faced by religious leaders at National and regional level on Advancing inclusion and Freedom of Religion and belief (FoRB). foster an inclusive peace strategy amidst Nigeria's diverse religious fabric. Discussions revolved around Recognizing the pivotal role that religious leaders play in peacebuilding amidst the diverse religious fabric, the workshop sought to address the different factors of marginalization driving conflicts in these contexts and the wider Western Africa region, while emphasizing the crucial values of human dignity, empathy, and inclusion.

In addition, Religious Leaders were equipped with practical skills on lobby and advocacy and supported to develop advocacy plans that will help them address challenges that they face in advancing for inclusion, Freedom of Religion and Belief and gender equity.

### Advocacy Visit to ECOWAS Offices in Abuja, Nigeria



ACRL-RfP conducted a Review of the policy architectures of the Regional Economic Blocs i.e., ECOWAS, IGAD, EAC and AU on FoRB, Women and Youth Rights with the aim of understanding the existing policies within these blocs on FoRB, Gender Equity, Youth Rights and Climate Action. The exercise aimed to also analyze the collaboration between regional economic blocs and religious stakeholders concerning these rights.

In preparation for the advocacy visit a validation workshop was conducted to agree on key advocacy message developed.

Led by the CAN president, Most Rev. Daniel Okoh, A delegation of religious leaders in West Africa visited ECOWAS Offices to meet with the commissioner of Human and Development and social affairs, Prof. Fatou Sow Sarr, and presented the policy brief with recommendations on Religious Leaders inclusion in ECOWAS structures and peace processes in the region



# Exploratory visit with Inclusive peace on National Dialogue in Ethiopia



In February ACRL in collaboration with Inclusive Peace (IP) conducted an exploratory visit and engaged different actors in Ethiopia in a bid to understand the role of religious leaders and CSO actors in the National Dialogue process. During the visit ACRL and IP engaged in discussions with representatives of different religious institutions in a bid understand the context, to understand the role of religious leaders in the process and how best they can be supported to engage.

Following the exploratory visit, ACRL In collaboration with Inclusive Peace, the Ethiopia Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) and the Inter-Religious Council

of Ethiopia (IRCE), convened 2 workshops for Religious Leaders in Ethiopia i.e., in May and November 2023 respectively, with the aim of orienting them on the different modalities of the National Dialogue process, and vital role that religious actors can play. The workshop sought to equip senior religious leaders with practical skills and knowledge on how they can engage and contribute to the ND process. The sessions, which were facilitated by Mr. Rainer Gude from IP and Dr. Francis Kuria and were based on the research and case studies developed by Inclusive Peace on National Dialogue processes in different contexts from across the globe.

# Supporting Religious Leaders in Tanzania & Burundi to conduct Message Development Workshops and Advocacy Visits.

ACRL supported IRCPT to develop advocacy messages revolving around issues of Child Marriages, Single Parenthood and Divorce (leading causes resulting to street children in Tanzania). The workshop culminated in an advocacy visit of a religious leaders delegation in Dodoma.

## Integral Human Development

ACRL – RfP anchors its work in the notion of shared wellbeing where the individual wellbeing is dependent on the wellbeing of the community and society and the health of planet earth. This is located within the ACRL – RfP program area on integral human development, that emphasizes the holistic development of individuals, considering their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. It goes beyond traditional measures of development, such as economic growth, to encompass the overall well-being and fulfillment of human potential. It recognizes that individuals are interconnected with their communities and environments, and that sustainable development must take into account the needs and aspirations of all people. It emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals to actively participate in shaping their own development and the development of their communities.

In 2023, Integral human development program continued to emphasize the importance of promoting human dignity, solidarity, and the common good and provided a framework for addressing complex development challenges in a holistic and sustainable manner through the various trainings and resource material development.





### WCAR Faith & Culture Conference

On 2nd of February 2023, ACRL-RfP in collaboration with UNICEF Western and Central Africa Regional Office convened a hybrid 'Faith and Culture Conference on Ending Harmful Cultural Practices affecting children.' The THE FAITH& CULTURE CONFERENCE conference was held in Cotonou, Benin with 30 people convening physically and 57 virtually. Religious leaders, women of faith and youth in faith from Benin, Burkina faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, participated and committed to promote change in attitudes and behaviours using the right information to end all forms of harmful practices and violence on children in WCAR. The traditional leaders who included

the King of Cotonou and the Voudou representatives reiterated their efforts on influencing their followers to ensure protection of children from harmful practices were yielding fruit. The technical input by UNICEF enlightened the participants on the trends in child marriages and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the region. The discussions highlighted the dire need for inclusive and multisectoral approaches, involving several stakeholders, the government, religious leaders, traditional leaders, the voices of the people and children to achieve greater impact. The conference was held at a time the world was commemorating the International Day on "Zero Tolerance to FGM" and ACRL-RfP maintained the momentum and initiated an informative social media campaign on 6th February 2023 to rally the support of men and boys in protecting girls and women.

## ESAR consultation meeting on immunization and integration into routine immunization

ACRL-RfP in collaboration with UNICEF ESARO held a virtual consultation meeting on Immunization. The aim was to reflect back on the past 2 years, acknowledging the gains, best practices and gaps in interfaith response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This was a follow up to the Faith and Science Conference on Covid-19, which was held in March 2021, at the time focusing on COVID-19 vaccines delivery, addressing identified barriers and drivers for vaccine demand and uptake. The Covid-19 pandemic



saw a roll back of the advancements realized in the past years on essential services including basic health care and most significantly immunization for under 5 children and the zero dose communities.

The situation has remained compounded with recent health emergencies in the region such as the Ebola, Polio and Measles outbreaksfor the call for multi-sectoral collaborations to promote and advocate for health interventions towards the poorest populations, to enable countries to improve their essential health service delivery to serve their risk populations equally in restoration and maintenance of vaccination and immunization remains imperative..

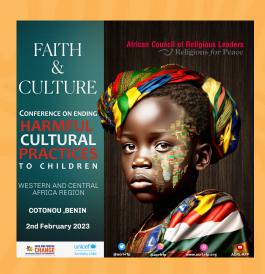
The deliberations underscored the fundamental role of faith leaders in immunization and access to essential health services, leveraging their comparative advantage to mobilize and reach

communities. The key areas recommended for intervention by religious leaders included:

- a) Community engagement through facilitating and creating spaces for community led conversations and interactions on vaccine safety, efficacy and adverse effect on special specific aroups:
- b) Development of messages and dissemination of the right information to address questions, concerns and dispel myths or rumors;
- c) Building long lasting trust to decrease vaccine hesitancy and increase demand and uptake by publicizing champions support for vaccination and immunization, facilitating feedback collection and dissemination to decision-makers and integrating FBO members into existing activities.







# Rapid assessment survey on behavioral drivers and barriers to covid-19 and routine faith communities.

The survey was coordinated within the FPCC initiative by Religions for Peace through the regional chapters, targeting 10 countries/interreligious councils Brazil, Guatemala, Egypt Kenya, Zambia, Mali and Nigeria,Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan. The Viamo rapid survey used the interactive voice response messaging to collect data on barriers and drivers among faith communities affecting routine childhood vaccinations and COVID-19 vaccination. Kenya, Zambia, Mali and Nigeria IRC through coordinators mobilized 10,000 faith community members as respondents who participated in the survey.

The research aimed at understanding different faith communities' perceptions, experiences, issues, opinions, concerns and complaints in relation to COVID-19 and routine immunization services for under 5 children that may place them at risk; to identify the demographic and behavioral characteristics related to vaccine uptake (e.g., gender, age, or family income) and to identify various cultural and faith-related beliefs surrounding vaccination.

### Faith Guidance Resource material for immunization

The Zambia Interfaith Networking Group (ZINGO) ratified a cooperation agreement with UNICEF Zambia implementing an intervention dubbed "Child Health Promotion" in 10 select districts. The project aims to engage faith communities in sensitization and awareness of the public to influence and promote family practices that respond to public health emergencies including COVID-19 and Polio vaccine demand.

The development of the vaccine module guide involved a process The process of cocreation ensured incorporation of inputs from UNICEF, theologians and religious leaders women and youth. It is envisage dthat once finalized it will build capapoity of faith leaders in advocacy efforts for immunization fo under 5 chidren.



### Religious Leaders Agree on Ending Violence Against Children in Eastern and Southern Africa Region

The African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace organized a three-day workshop on building the capacity of religious leaders to design and implement preventive and response actions on child discipline, sexual abuse, and child marriage in Eastern & Southern Africa Region. The workshop convened 35 participants including faith leaders from 8 IRCs; Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The event was graced by the ACRL-RfP Co-Chairs, His Eminence Sheikh Shaban Mubaje and the Most Reverend Archbishop Albert Chama and the UNICEF Zambia Country Representative, Dr. Penelope Campbell.

The event was based on the international child rights instruments, that is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the integration of these into programming and action planning to respond to child rights violations.

It was an opportunity for faith leaders and institutions to explore and reflect upon the key instruments and provisions on child protection at global, regional, and national levels and how they can be involved in realizing the global goals of zero tolerance to violence against children. A seven-year regional framework outlining action plans to end Violence Against Children by 2030 was developed.



## Promoting child protection by addressing harmful practices and violence against children

ACRL-RfP in collaboration with UNICEF Western and Central Africa Regional Office convened a hybrid 'Faith and Culture Conference on Ending Harmful Cultural Practices affecting children.' The conference was held in Cotonou, Benin with 30 people convening physically and 57 virtually. The UNICEF office presented

the situation of children in the region analyzing the recent trends in child marriages and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

The discussions highlighted the dire need for inclusive and multisectoral approaches, involving several stakeholders, the government, religious leaders, traditional leaders, the voices of the people and children to achieve a great impact. Further, religious leaders were called upon to respond, with the right information to counter-arguments and misinformation supporting harmful practices, that are based on wrong interpretation of scientific information and misinterpretation of religion.

A commitment statement was developed and adapted with resolves to promote a change in attitudes and behaviors to end all forms of harm and violence to children.

Ensuing the conference, ACRL-RfP initiated an informative social media campaign in commemoration of the International Day on "Zero Tolerance to FGM" on 6th February 2023 to rally the support of men and boys in protecting girls and women.





## Support for Dialogues and restreshers on Mind Heart Dialogue

Activity during the Eastern & Southern Africa confrence on

ACRL – RfP supported the convening faith-based scholars and experts at the regional level and county consultations to provide inputs and endorsement of the reviewed Mind Heart Dialogue Facilitators' Guide. The reviewed guide was used during refresher trainings of 52 MHD facilitators in Burkina Faso, Malawi, Zambia, Sierra Leone and South Sudan during the month of October 2023.

### **Environment**



"Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"—

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987

ACRL-RfP's advocacy on environmental issues is rooted in the recognition that religious communities have a crucial role to play in promoting environmental stewardship and sustainable development across Africa. By engaging in dialogue, raising awareness, advocating for policies, and implementing practical initiatives, ACRL-RfP contributes to collective efforts to address the continent's pressing environmental challenges and build a more sustainable future for all.

# Empowering Women & Youth for Environmental Sustainability

The Sahel region, a vast intermediary zone between the Sahara and the Savannah, stretches 5,000 kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, encompassing ten countries, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal. These nations grapple with climate hazards such as heatwaves, droughts, floods, and biodiversity loss, which heavily impact agriculture. Women in agriculture are disproportionately affected, with limited water capacity during dry seasons reducing yields by 30%. These environmental challenges have exacerbated the conflict, allowing armed groups to expand their influence and increasing the threat of violent extremism from Sahelian militant Islamist groups, which recruit young Muslim herders.

In recognition of these interconnected challenges, ACRL-RfP

implemented a program in 2023 that aimed to empower the roles of the Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal Interreligious Councils (IRCs) in promoting environmental stewardship and conflict transformation.

The program focused on capacity building equipping 85 Women of Faith and Interfaith youth as Trainers of Trainers (TOTs) in tree planting and environmental conservation practices aligned with the **Farming God's Way** Principles, a framework promoting Conservation Agriculture.

The Women and Youth TOTs then cascaded their knowledge and skills to congregational leaders and community members within Sahelian communities, aimed at fostering a culture of environmental awareness and active participation in restoration initiatives.

This multi-faceted intervention aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

Group Photo of traained participants in Malikoutiala

- Increased tree planting and improved land management practices aimed at mitigating climate change impacts and promoting long-term agricultural resilience within the Sahel.
- Empowerment of Women of Faith and Interfaith Youth with leadership skills in environmental stewardship.
- Enhanced collaborative efforts focused on environmental restoration to bridge divides between communities, fostering peacebuilding and reducing the appeal of violent extremism.

To further support the environmental conservation efforts and address water scarcity challenges, ACRL-RfP facilitated the Mali IRC to establish a water borehole, complete with a solar-powered water pump and water tank in the Koutiala region of Mali. This intervention will ensure a reliable water source for tree planting and irrigated agroforestry practices, especially during dry seasons. It has the potential to contribute to improved WASH indicators within communities, leading to better nutrition and dietary diversity, ultimately fostering improved intercommunal relations.



A group photo of the Burkina Faso IRC Members of the Environment Commission, Women of Faith and Youth Inter-faith Network Members, during the training on Tree planting and Environment Conservation.

### Strengthening of the West Africa Hub for effective engagement and sustained actions on climate change and conflict prevention.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has taken a significant step forward in addressing the climate crisis through the adoption of a Regional Climate Strategy in April 2022. This strategic framework, anchored in regional solidarity and collective action, aims to systematically integrate climate considerations into the organization's directives and operations.

While the ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy has been widely commended for its unifying approach, a closer examination reveals key areas that require strengthening to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency. Notably, the strategy's engagement model lacks specific methodologies for involving diverse stakeholders based on their unique social value propositions. This oversight extends to the explicit recognition of religious leaders as crucial stakeholders, despite their influential role in African societies.

Recognizing these critical gaps, in October 2023 ACRL-RfP supported the West Africa Hub to conduct a policy landscape review focused on the intersection of gender equality, climate change and the role of religious leaders- a crucial area that had been overlooked in the ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy.

Specifically, the assessment evaluated ECOWAS's progress in universalizing and implementing regional laws and policies, with a keen focus on the regional climate adaptation and resilience strategy, the implementation of global climate agreements, and the establishment of a collaboration framework between ECOW-AS and religious leaders. This holistic approach aimed to provide

ECOWAS with actionable insights to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of its climate action efforts across West Africa.

The review culminated in a set of strategic recommendations compiled into a policy brief presented to ECOWAS by a delegation from the West Africa Hub. These recommendations include:

- Deliberate engagement of religious leaders in the policy development process.
- Development of a specific engagement model for religious leaders, acknowledging their unique social influence and extensive community networks.
- Partnership with religious leaders and providing capacity-building support to enhance their role in climate action.
- Showcase the value of gender perspectives in climate action and women's empowerment.
- Recognition of the diverse climate-related activities and initiatives spearheaded by religious leaders.
- Consider the use of inclusive religious language to promote human dignity and respect for religious freedom in climate action

By embracing these recommendations, ECOWAS can leverage the moral authority and convening power of religious leaders to refine and implement a more comprehensive and inclusive Regional Climate Strategy. This strategic approach has the potential to foster greater collaboration, community-driven engagement, and a shared sense of responsibility in tackling the climate crisis across West Africa



ACRL-RfP leveraged on the inaugural Africa's Climate Summit, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2023, a significant milestone for Africa, that sought to establish Africa's shared priorities for global forums such as the UNGA, G20, WBG, IMF Annual Meetings, and UNFCCC COP28. The summit highlighted key issues, including adaptation, resilience, renewable energy, sustainable development, and climate action financing.

In collaboration with regional partners such as the Africa Centre for Sustainable and Inclusive Development (Africa CSID), Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation for a Sustainable Africa (ICCASA), Lake Region Environment Network (LREN), KAIROS, International Alert, and the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK), ACRL-RfP organized a side event including a hybrid Sidelines event titled "Integrating Gender-Responsive Approaches and Faith Principles into Climate Action and Conflict Transformation in Building Climate Resilience in Africa."

This initiative aimed to amplify the voices of Religious Leaders, Women, and Youth leaders in addressing climate change, ensuring their perspectives influence the regional and global climate agenda. The event, attended by diverse stakeholders, resulted in a call to action that was partly incorporated into the Nairobi Declaration, and is expected to shape Africa's position at the broader climate agendas.

Additionally, ACRL-RfP, hosted an exhibition booth to highlight the transformative power of interfaith dialogues in promoting women's empowerment, environmental restoration, and conflict prevention. The booth featured a variety of interactive exhibits, including a showcase of interfaith dialogue initiatives in Senegal, Mali and Burkina Faso, a display on the role of women in environmental stewardship, and a demonstration of Farming God's Way, a sustainable agriculture approach based on the principles of environmental stewardship and social justice

### Institutional Strengthening



Institutional strengthening at the African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace is crucial for enhancing the organization's capacity to effectively engage in interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, and advocacy. By strengthening its institutional capacities, ACRL - RfP can better fulfill its mandate through interfaith collaboration and dialogue, contributing to its broader mission of advancing peace and sustainable development globally. In 2023, ACRL – RfP worked to strengthen its networks and partnership and collaboration opportunities for effective roll out of its strategic priorities.

#### **National Interreligious councils**

The African Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace partnership with UNICEF ESARO has over the years adapted the faith approach, engaging faith leaders to promote the wellbeing of children in Eastern and Southern Africa Region. This has been enhanced through a project - the Faith and Positive Change for Children, families and communities (FPCC) initiative.

Through this initiative, implemented since 2019 in the region, it has promoted collaborations between select UNICEF Country Offices and the National Inter Religious Councils (NIRCs) in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe on different set priority issues.

Eswatini has over the years presented a record prevalence in Violence Against Children (VAC) and young women. The major forms include sexual violence and child marriage. Considering VAC is one of priority issues of the FPCC initiative, the partnership sought

to leverage the regional collaboration to support meaningful engagement with faith leaders and UNICEF Eswatini on child protection.

ACRL-RIP therefore conducted an exploratory visit in Eswatini with the objective to commence discussions for formation of an interreligious platform and to understand the current situation of children in the country for possible entry points for intervention through the partnership with UNICEF ESARO The Kingdom of Eswatini continues to face development challenges which impose negative effects on the wellbeing of children. During the introductory meeting with representatives of the identified faith groups, which was convened on 16th February, the faith leaders recognized the high levels of poverty, incidences and prevalence of communicable diseases such as HIV and high incidences of violence, particularly gender-based violence against children as priority intervention areas.

The faith leaders committed to commence the process of establishing an interfaith platform, bringing together all practicing faiths in Eswatini by developing and strengthening intercultural and interreligious dialogue initiatives and mobilizing resources and capacitate the council and its members to implement actions and programs geared towards achieving the moral and shared commitments to contribute to the country's development.

Further, ACRL – RfP engaged various religious actors and key stakeholders in Eswatini, further pointing to the need for the establishment an interfaith forum. This will provide an entry point for joint actions and programs geared towards achieving the moral and shared commitments to contribute to the country's development.

#### Partnership and Collaboration

ACRL-RfP attended the Bread for the World Partners Workshop, a dynamic platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. The workshop demonstrated participating organizations' commitment to addressing socioeconomic and environmental challenges.



Commissioning and launch of MIYN film by the president of Mauritus.

The interactive sessions encouraged collaboration and innovation among project partners, resulting in stronger partnerships and reaffirming a shared commitment to making a long-term difference in improving living conditions for marginalized communities.

Courtesy Visit of Zimbabwe Inter-Religious Council The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) made a courtesy visit to ACRL-RfP offices in Nairobi, Kenya. Led by Bishop Ignatios Makumbe, the President ZCC and Rev. Wilfred Dimingu, Secretary General Zimbabwe Inter Religious Council (ZIRC), the delegation shared on their status, majorly on the engagement of religious leaders in the political and social sphere of the country.

With the upcoming elections in Zimbabwe in August, the delegation noted that they were intervening through inclusive electoral dialogues and engagements to promote peace and tolerance for a smooth transition and calling for accountability and transparency of the electoral process.

ACRL-RfP committed to continue supporting ZIRC advance their reconciliation actions and national dialogues for healing and peace of the country.

### Youth Advocacy Champions Training in Kenya and Malawi

Utilizing the UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide (YAG), a resource created by young people, for young people to support and empower their journeys towards influencing meaningful change at local, national and international level, The Youth Advocacy Training were organized.

At the in-country Youth Advocacy replication trainings – facilitated by the 2 Champion ToTs for Kenya and Malawi, the young trainees discussed their experiences in youth engagement and the barriers preventing them and their peers from creating the change they want to see. They were taken beyond simple capacity building moments to developing and supporting longer-term advocacy project implementation and success. 40 young people were trained with 20 each in Kenya and Malawi.

#### Launch of Mauritius Inter-Faith Youth Network

The Council of Religions and the Mauritius Film Development Corporation Launched a documentary film called "Youth Ahead". The Council of Religions also launched its "Youth Wing" with a Youth Charter, which aims to support the youth in building their religious values through interfaith dialogue, encouraging religious peace and sustainable development, providing avenues for spiritual intelligence, and empowering them to reach self-realization.

The Youth Wing will function through representatives of different faiths including high level officials, including H.E President of Mauritius Mr. Prithviraj sing Roopun and will focus on developing intelligence in various areas. The motto of the Youth Wing is "Different faiths but common actions".

#### Re-Launch of the Ethiopian Women of Faith Network

The Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development, Dialogue, and Action (EIFDDA) celebrated the revitalization of the Ethiopian Women of Faith Network (EWoFN) at the CASSIOPEIA Hotel in Addis Ababa.

This re-launch, supported by ACRL- RfP as part of their ongoing commitment to fostering inclusion and unity, marks a significant step forward in empowering women in peacebuilding, governance, and sustainable development. With its re-launch, Ethiopia Women of Faith Network (EWoFN) is set to embark on a renewed journey, championing the cause of women and ensuring their voices echo throughout Ethiopia's religious and social landscape

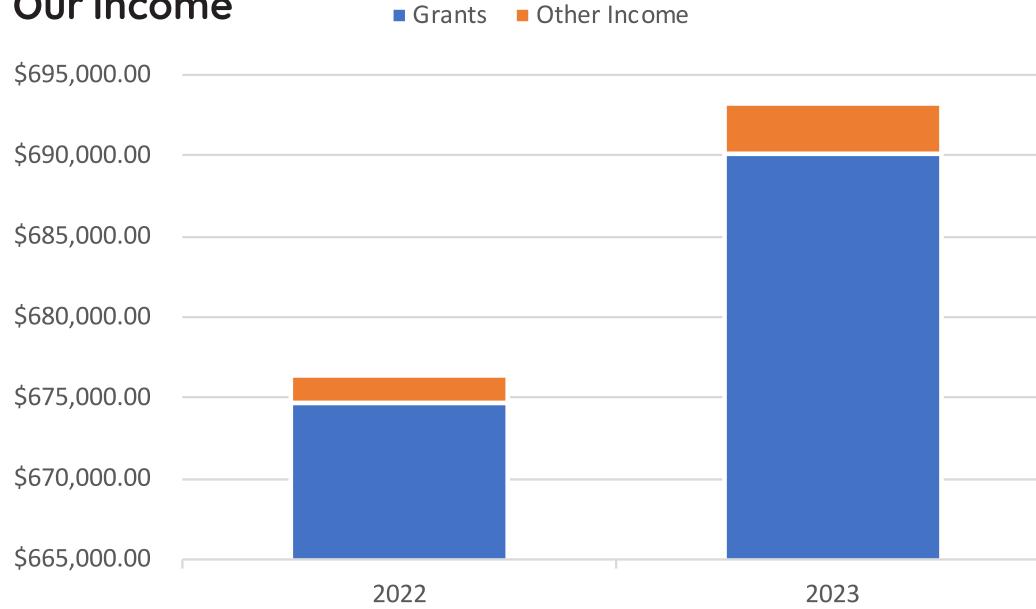
#### International Youth Day 2023- "Green Skills for Youth

ACRL-RfP and the African Interfaith Youth Network (AIYN) collaborated to host a webinar themed "Faith in Action: Empowering Youth for a Green Economy Towards a Sustainable Future." This webinar explored the critical role of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in supporting Africa's Green Transition and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The webinar was divided into three sessions that enlightened, inspired, and empowered youth across the region. The sessions provided a deep understanding of Africa's Green Transition and facilitated the exchange of valuable experiences. They also empowered participants to advance the SDGs by providing recommendations on how to accelerate the acquisition of green skills in education, governance, and civil society.

In addition to the webinar, AIYN launched a social media campaign to raise awareness of the importance of nurturing green skills among youth. This campaign, rooted in faith principles, reflected a shared commitment to cultivating a generation of young leaders who can lead Africa toward a sustainable and environmentally harmonious future. The webinar and social media campaign demonstrate ACRL-RfP and AIYN's dedication to empowering youth, fostering sustainability principles, and embarking on a transformative journey towards a greener, more prosperous Africa.

### **Finance**

### **Our Income**



### **Our Audited Reports**

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS

TO THE MEMBERS OF

AFRICAN COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS - RELIGIONS FOR PEACE (CONTINUED..)

Auditor's responsibility for the Audit of the financial statements (Continued...)

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, mis presentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are
  appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the
  organization's internal controls.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Executive Committee.
- conclude on the appropriateness of the executive committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Executive Committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The engagement partner responsible for the audit resulting in this independent auditor's report is CPA Paul G. Ihiga, Practising Certificate No. P/1932.

For and on behalf of PSCO LLP Certified Public Accountants Nairobi, Kenya

Date: 26 March 2024

AFRICAN COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS - RELIGIONS FOR PEACE ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT AND STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE

INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	2023 US\$	2022 US\$	2023 Kshs	2022 Kshs
INCOME					
Grants received	2	690,162	674,677	97,582,832	80,895,639
Other income	3	3,108	1,736	436,049	204,344
Total income		693,270	676,413	98,018,881	81,099,983
EXPENDITURE					
Programs expenses:					
Peace & Justice	8	135,981	176,961	18,896,819	20,829,812
Sustainable Development	9	257,294	190,814	35,834,283	22,460,45
IRC Development	10	32,320	55,105	4,928,539	6,486,310
Capacity Building	11	23,883	52,568	3,379,601	6,187,72
Youth	12	1,610	11,255	237,282	1,324,81
Women	13	1,590	-	234,334	-
Total programs expenses		452,678	486,703	63,510,858	57,289,129
Core and OTPS expenses:					
Staff expenses:					
Staff Expenses	14	106,241	144,212	14,892,477	16,975,01
Total staff expenses		106,241	144,212	14,892,477	16,975,01
Administration expenses	15	25,393	34,081	4,657,268	3,996,04
Total Core and OTPS expenses		131,634	178,293	19,549,744	20,971,05
Foreign exchange loss/(gain)		-	6,070	(2,601,717)	714,46
Amortisation of capital grant		(2,090)	(3,602)	(327,014)	(423,95
Total expenditure		582,222	667,464	80,131,871	78,550,696
Under/(over) utilized funds and					
comprehensive income for the year		111,048	8,950	17,887,010	2,549,28

AFRICAN COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS - RELIGIONS FOR PEACE
ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2023

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	AS AT 31ST DECE	MBER 2023			
NET ASSETS					
		2023	2022	2023	2022
	Notes	US\$	US\$	Kshs	Kshs
Non-current assets					
Property and equipment	4	210,224	266,041	32,891,652	31,315,711
Intangible assets - WIP	5	1,846		288,800	
		212,070	266,041	33,180,452	31,315,711
Current assets					
Cash and cash equivalents	6	157,717	62,344	24,676,400	7,338,535
Less: Current liabilities					
Payables	7	23,711	17,562	3,709,778	2,067,168
Net current assets		134,006	44,783	20,966,621	5,271,367
Net assets		346,076	310,824	54,147,073	36,587,078
REPRESENTED BY:					
Property and equipment fund		210,224	266,041	32,891,652	31,315,711
Accumulated fund		(20,589)	(165,937)	(3,221,376)	(19,532,444
Capital grant	16	156,441	210,720	24,476,797	24,803,811
Total funds		346,076	310,824	54,147,073	36,587,078

The financial statements on pages 7 to 19 were approved by the executive committee on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

Tenneuros

Secretary General

