

"They talk about peace,  
but we were not included  
nor informed"

## YOUTH PEACEBUILDING WITHIN THE TRIPLE NEXUS







# YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY – A GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION

In December 2015 the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2250: Youth, Peace and Security, representing a historic moment for the recognition of young people around the world as catalysts for peace and conflict prevention. This landmark resolution recognised that youth are not just a threat to peace that must be contained, nor victims of conflict initiated and led by people more powerful than themselves; they are also actors involved in the prevention of violence and the pursuit of peace in their communities and beyond.

**Resolution 2250 is closely connected to Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security**, not only because 50% of ‘youth’ are female, but because Resolution 1325 urges us to examine the gendered nature of conflict and peacebuilding and the different experiences of conflict by people of all genders and ages.

Islamic Relief <sup>1</sup>, in partnership with Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency,

has risen to the challenge set by Resolution 2250 with its triple nexus programme aimed primarily at supporting women and youth to participate in conflict transformation in fragile areas.<sup>2</sup>

## RESOLUTION 2250 ON YOUTH PEACE AND SECURITY CALLS FOR UN MEMBER STATES TO:

- Increase the participation of youth in peace processes
- Protect young civilians from violence in and after conflict, including sexual and gender-based violence
- Support young people to prevent the outbreak of violence
- Increase partnerships between international and multilateral organisations and young peacebuilders
- Reintegrate young combatants into society.



Peace football tournament for young men from conflicting clans in Mandera County, Kenya (2019)

## ISLAMIC RELIEF'S TRIPLE NEXUS APPROACH TO HUMAN SECURITY

Islamic Relief's Triple Nexus approach to human security is aligned to the **Agenda for Humanity and United Nations 2030 sustainable development agenda** which emphasizes the importance of "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development". Our approach prioritises the principle of **Leave No One Behind** and is informed by local cultural and faith traditions of peacebuilding.

To help communities achieve sustainable, inclusive peace as a basis for human security, we adopt a community-centred approach that brings a blend of development, humanitarian and peacebuilding support, with a focus on the most excluded groups in society, such as women, youth and minority groups. Since our Triple Nexus approach is implemented in some of the world's most fragile places, it is informed by strong context analysis and context sensitivity processes and is designed to be agile, adapting to changing conditions, risks and opportunities.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

- Peace will come through transformative attitudinal and behavioural change of a mass of individuals, particularly women and youth, and key institutional partners.
- Peace will emerge through the breaking down of isolation, polarisation, division, prejudice and stereotypes within and amongst groups.
- If we mobilise enough support for peaceful resolution of disputes and for promotion of tolerance, then political leaders will listen and take action.
- If formal and informal institutions within government, civil society and the private sector perform in an effective and responsive way providing reasonable livelihoods, stability and quality of life then the extent of core grievances and conflict would decline. and multilateral organisations and young peacebuilders

Islamic Relief's Triple Nexus pilot programme, running from 2018 to 2021, works to build social cohesion and improve community resilience to conflict in especially fragile areas of Pakistan, Kenya, Indonesia and the Philippines. It is funded by Sida's Unit for Peace and Human Security to achieve Sweden's Sustainable Peace Strategy (2017-2022).

With a total investment of \$5.5m USD, the programme has three aims:

1. Critical partnerships towards sustaining an environment of mutual trust, confidence and collaboration for peace and development;
2. Improved human security and stability through access to basic services leads to a decline in core grievances in communities; and
3. Formal and informal institutions provide opportunities in response to economic needs of youth and women, and builds resilience and reduces their susceptibility to violence and conflict.

The programme delivers a context-specific blend of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding support to help communities in the four countries, especially women and youth, establish mechanisms together with local duty bearers to manage the impact of conflict, climate and natural disasters and recover their livelihoods. It has particularly focused on supporting women and youth to engage in community reconciliation, local dispute resolution and trust-building as equally valued members of their societies. The programme has also supported communities to establish positive and systematic working relations with key duty bearers (such as local government, local police forces and customary justice providers) to address grievances, missing basic services and the provision of justice.

This case study focuses on how Islamic Relief is investing in the peacebuilding capacity of youth in Pakistan, Kenya, Indonesia and the Philippines as part of a holistic package of support to fragile communities. While the contexts in each country are different, there are some commonalities in Islamic Relief's approach.



Peacebuilding training for community-based youth Peace and Development Facilitators in Mindanao, the Philippines (2019)

## ISLAMIC RELIEF'S APPROACH TO SUPPORTING YOUNG COMMUNITY-BASED PEACEBUILDERS

1. Together with young people themselves, design a youth mobilisation strategy based on a good context analysis, including a gender analysis, local cultural norms and insight from key stakeholders within communities.
2. Work with existing legal frameworks for youth participation in local/village governance where these are supportive of youth leadership, or support young people to form alternative structures where they are not. Support youth groups to obtain legal registration and draw up clear terms of reference to manage and regenerate themselves over time.
3. Ensure youth groups are formed inclusively, paying special attention to the inclusion of minority ethnic/religious groups, low income groups, women and people with disabilities.
4. Support entire youth groups to prevent over-reliance on one or two high profile individuals and sustain support until youth groups become independent. Support may take the form of skills training, mentoring, coaching or convening of meetings with officials, based on needs identified by young people themselves.
5. Allow youth groups to direct the pace and nature of their engagement, especially in local disputes. They have the best knowledge of the issues that are safe for them to engage in.
6. Support youth groups and duty-bearing institutions, such as local government and law enforcement agencies, as well as customary authorities and faith leaders, to forge positive working (inter-generational) relations to address community issues and escalating tensions.
7. Support local governance systems to engage youth groups in discussions and decisions related to planning, budgeting and prioritising across all sectors: social, political, economic, environmental and cultural.
8. Highlight the added value of youth peacebuilders to communities, such as the greater influence and connections that they have with other youth, their more sophisticated use of technology and social media, or their higher levels of literacy.
9. Focus on building strong, sustainable systems of youth leadership in community decision-making and dispute resolution which will endure in the long term, rather than seeking 'quick wins' or an immediate reduction in violence.
9. Adopt a phased, nexus approach, starting with the provision of practical, tangible assistance to help young people meet their immediate needs, start to build viable livelihoods and establish trust with the project before moving on to peacebuilding support where the impact is less tangible and the issues more sensitive.



# THE PHILIPPINES

Maguindanao is one of five provinces in the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines, which was created following the signing of the peace agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) after a decades-long war in Mindanao. Although the war has formally ended, conflict between the Philippines military and armed groups that were not signatories to the peace agreement continues sporadically. There is also a continuing problem of rido - clan violence. Some young people have engaged in violence for a multitude of reasons and all have been affected either directly by violence or indirectly by widespread insecurity and displacement over the years.

Islamic Relief has been working to support the implementation of the peace agreement and community-based peacebuilding in three municipalities: Datu Piang, Datu Hoffer and Datu Saudi Ampatuan. With the help of a local ceasefire monitoring group<sup>2</sup>, it identified 20 young people who

were interested in becoming community peace and development facilitators. These young community facilitators participated in a youth peace camp with around 100 other young peace champions in which conflict-generating myths and stereotypes about Muslims, Christians and Indigenous people were debunked using storytelling, art and music and young people crafted new messages of social harmony, tolerance and peace. They participated in training sessions on peace and development principles rooted in Islam, alongside local government officials and traditional leaders. They also engaged in mediation and dispute resolution training and learnt about how to use social media communications for peace advocacy.

These young peace and development facilitators now work within their own communities to tackle polarisation, prejudice of others, marginalisation and exclusion in order to build social cohesion. They organise their peers to bring different religious communities together for reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust, they are active on social media in addressing rumours of violent incidents and advocating for peace, they visit schools to promote peace values and they mobilise their peers for an array of voluntary activities to enhance their communities.



Mural painting in the Philippines as part of a youth-led peace campaign in Mindanao in 2019. 'Lungtad Kalilintad' means 'sustainable peace'



**MUNISA K. SINSUAT (FEMALE, AGE 21):  
A COMMUNITY-BASED YOUTH PEACE AND  
DEVELOPMENT FACILITATOR**

*“We did not know what peace is. I felt hopeless and saw no future for me, as war burned our house to the ground on two occasions, drove us to evacuate our village and my studies were continuously disrupted. The project rekindled my spirit. I thought Allah may have a plan for me. Perhaps I have a role to play in the building of peace.”*

In June 2020 the largest rido in Maguindanao, which pitted commanders of the MILF against each other, was settled with a peace agreement. However, followers of both commands were still hesitant to venture into each other’s territories or interact with one another. Munisa has friends on both sides of the conflicting camps. To build trust between her friends, she and her classmates decided to organize a gathering and hold a ‘boodle

fight’. A boodle fight is a group meal that dispenses with cutlery and dishes. Instead the food is placed on banana leaves on a long table. Diners gather around the table and eat with their bare hands, referred to in Filipino custom as ‘kamayan’. This removes the boundaries between diners. Munisa and her classmates invited their friends from both sides of the camps to join the boodle fight.

“We wanted to show our friends from both sides of the camps that is safe now to interact with one another, as the conflict has already been settled” Munisa explained. She said that they were successful as their friends renewed acquaintances and had fun together.

Munisa said that it felt good to see people who used to be on opposing sides of conflict come together as friends: *“The feeling was uplifting”*.



In Barangay Talibadok, youth peace and development facilitators organised learning sessions, a communal vegetable garden, peace camps and peace planning to bring together youths from the Teduray tribe and Maguindanaoan community. In the past there had been violent conflict over land grabbing and killings, in which the Teduray tribe were often the victims. Morsid Samama (male, age 23) says *“We understand each other now. We exerted efforts to understand their language and so did they. Because of this, we have come to understand each other’s values and behaviors”*. For a year now, there has been no incidence of conflict between the Teduray and Maguindanao in Barangay Talibadok. Instead local residents have reported increasing efforts to build relationships amongst the two groups.

These activities and many more help to lessen the tension, build trust between youths of different religions or clans and establish relationships that can be called upon to de-escalate incidents that might otherwise cause an escalation of violence and reprisals. Conflict is most easily resolved before it escalates and draws in wider groups and actors with their own agendas. Community-based facilitators help to prevent and resolve disputes between groups before they escalate.

Although these young peace and development facilitators are respected members of their communities, it is important to institutionalise youth leadership in community peacebuilding so that the principle of youth leadership endures long beyond the project end and the graduation of youth peacebuilders into older peacebuilders.

The local barangay (village) governance system in the Philippines has an established role for youth councils on paper, but in many barangays there were no registered youth councils, so no functioning mechanism for youths to express their perspectives on village governance, including peace and conflict issues. As Joharis Upam (male, age 26) states: *“Perhaps they talk about peace, but we were not included nor informed”*.

Islamic Relief supported the establishment and registration of Barangay Youth Councils (Sangguniang Kabataan) in villages where they were missing and supported them to engage in barangay development planning processes, disaster risk reduction planning and barangay assemblies. As a result, the Barangay Youth Councils were given representation in the Barangay Development Council and the Lupong Tagapamayapa (Dispute Resolution Council). After



A training session on dialogue, negotiation and mediation for young people in Mindanao (2019)





Young community peacebuilders in the Philippines giving a presentation to school children on communicating for peace through social media (2019)

seeing this emerging youth participation, the Barangay Governments supported more youth activities in their localities, creating better relations between younger and older generations.

Adopting a triple nexus approach to conflict prevention has also meant supporting the development of economic opportunities for young people affected by conflict through technical and vocational training and the provision of shared services and equipment. Combining practical livelihoods assistance with peacebuilding support enables Islamic Relief to provide an integrated package of support to young people in fragile communities.

Although the project has not yet finished, the Islamic Relief team in the Philippines have seen an enormous psychological change in the young people with whom it works. At the start of the project, most of the youth said that they have no courage to voice their opinions and no confidence to do something for others or for the community. They were passive recipients of the situation: they evacuated, stopped schooling, hid in their homes and did not connect with other youth. They felt that they were not needed in peace work and their opinions were not important.

Now, the young peace and development facilitators

see themselves and their peers as socially engaged *“As youth leaders, we lobby and talk to barangay officials regarding youth and peace concerns of the community”* said Gapor G. Samama (male, age 23) of Barangay Damabalas.

Noraisa Kudarat (Female, age 30) is a peace and development facilitator in Barangay Talibadok who regularly guests on a local radio program after she was trained in peacebuilding by the project: *“I am using the local radio as a platform for peace advocacy”*, she explains.

Munisa shares the same confidence as the others. *“I have learned to speak my mind and influence other youth”* she said. She told of an incident involving a quarrel between her classmates that she settled: *“I helped settle their dispute by looking at both sides of the story and mediating a resolution”* she said.

These young people see their newfound culture of social engagement, which they call ‘May Pakialam’, as an important contribution to community peacebuilding in Maguindanao. They are rightly proud of their success, but their work is not yet done because sustaining youth leadership in the long term means a fundamental shift in community power relations and attitudes to young people.

# INDONESIA

Sumbawa Island is adjacent to the tourist islands of Lombok and Bali but is very different. It is a relatively poor island which suffers from frequent droughts and floods and high levels of youth gang violence in the east. Using home-made weapons, youths from rival villages pressure their peers to join them in attacks, counter-attacks and pitched battles, which impact upon whole communities. Islamic Relief, with the support of three local NGOs and local government and law enforcement agencies, has worked intensively with 180 young people in nine village youth peace groups within three districts/regencies. These peace groups are formally registered with the local government and are positioned within the village governance system, which is the lowest level of governance in Indonesia. They work with the village government, including community-based police and military representatives, and are allocated a budget.

The village youth peace groups received training in conflict analysis, Do No Harm principles, peacebuilding and human rights. They built action plans to prevent and resolve local level disputes and presented their action plans to the district/regency government and law enforcement actors for approval. The groups have regular meetings with law enforcement officials to maintain a two-way dialogue on issues of concern

and a joined-up approach to conflict management. Islamic Relief also set up mushroom farming co-operatives to improve economic opportunities for women and young people and support the peace gains of the project.

Before the youth peace groups were set up, village governance was managed by a small group of community elders with no youth representation and very few women involved. As a result, young people sometimes felt that the elders did not fully understand the situation and did not make effective decisions, so they turned to violence to seek justice. Disputes tended to quickly escalate with no early intervention.

The village youth peace groups are now actively engaged in mediating disputes among the youth, managing security and building better inter-village relations. For example, in Bima Regency, youth peace groups peacefully settled a land dispute between two villages which was becoming violent. They also settled a youth gang fight between people from different villages.

The village youth peace groups are also involved in organising more effective disaster management systems, because frequent natural disasters sometimes cause an escalation in village tensions due to incoherent disaster response mechanisms. Youth groups drew up community disaster risk reduction plans together with village leaders, local officials



Young community peacebuilders in a training on peacebuilding, gender and human rights in Indonesia (2018)





and law enforcement actors and erected disaster evacuation signs. As equal, legitimate representatives in village governance systems, young people feel they have more power and more say over the issues that affect them. This includes young women - at least 30% of youth peace group members are female. This is reflected in a policy change at the district level. Youth peace group discussions with the Bima City government led to a new city regulation in 2019 concerning community-based conflict resolution.

Reconciliation is a key component of restoring peace and harmony between conflicting groups who must continue to live in proximity to one another. In Indonesia there is a unique annual tradition of reconciliation among Muslim communities called Halal bi-halal. These are festivities performed at Eid-al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan which are centred around the asking and giving of forgiveness. The youth peace

groups in Sumbawa Island organised extensive and vibrant Halal bi-halal festivities for 2,000 villagers of all ages, genders and religions, as well as community elders and local government and law enforcement representatives. The youth groups invited villages in conflict with each other to join together in festivities for peace. Local Imams preached messages of forgiveness and social harmony while young people performed song and traditional dance performances. After pledging to forgive each other and restore social harmony, everyone feasted together.

#### ISLAMIC RELIEF'S GENEVA PEACE WEEK 2020

[Click here](#) to see Islamic Relief's Geneva Peace Week 2020 video featuring young people in Indonesia, Kenya and the Philippines using music, art, dance cultural traditions and religious rituals to engage in peacebuilding.

# PAKISTAN

Since the end of the war in Pakistan's border area, displaced communities have returned home to rebuild their lives under new governance arrangements with the Pakistan state. Previously, community disputes were mediated by a council of elders, the Jirga, with an arbitrator appointed by both sides. However, arbitrators were frequently accused of doing little to resolve the dispute, instead using their position to seek bribes. The Jirga also became at times corrupt, powerless or biased, according to the perceptions of young people in the area. In the highly patriarchal culture of the area, women had very little role in public life and young men were discouraged from airing their opinions in front of elders. Armed groups spilling over into the area offered a way for aggrieved parties to seek an alternative justice, but this merely led to a downward spiral of war, violence and displacement.

After the return of displaced communities was

complete, Islamic Relief supported communities to set up community organisations, women's organisations and youth groups to represent their needs and interests to local government and law enforcement agencies in an organised, inclusive and democratic way. Twelve youth groups, comprised of 180 members (120 male and 60 female) were trained on a range of social cohesion and dispute resolution topics and were given extensive support by Islamic Relief community mobilisation officers. They have quickly become very active mediators of local disputes which used to drag on for years. The disputes they have resolved include issues such as land demarcation, illegal drugs use, water resources, gunfights, education and polio vaccination issues, road construction and marriage engagements.

One youth group has so far resolved nine different local disputes which were causing unrest among communities. In their mediation of a water well access dispute, the young mediators involved the district police officer who helped to resolve the issue within two months after the first round of negotiations failed to



A youth group meeting in Pakistan (2020)



reach a resolution. One of the members of the youth group said: *“The resolution of disputes like this used to take years and until that time a lot of damage is done. It is a great success for us which will further pave the way for our acceptance in decision making processes”*.

#### **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

[Click here](#) to see a short video clip of a youth group member talking about their role in dispute resolution in their community.

An elder in the community showed how positively youth participation in public dispute resolution is now viewed: *“The youth group played a major role in the resolution of this dispute and we are happy”*.

#### **YOUTH INVOLVEMENT - DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

[Click here](#) to see a short video clip featuring this community elder talking about youth involvement in dispute resolution.

As part of our Triple Nexus approach, Islamic Relief also supported the reconstruction of drinking water supply schemes and irrigation systems that were damaged during the war in Pakistan. Access to water was one of the main issues causing tension between communities in the programme area so this has greatly helped to reduce tensions and provide a conducive environment for peace.

The young people supported by this programme report that the participation of the youth cohort in community decision-making and dispute resolution has left a lasting positive impact in their societies. They have observed a ripple effect in the aftermath of this success with youth more engaged and organized to address other issues like water and health in their areas. New economic opportunities were also being focused upon, creating a positive atmosphere of change and prosperity.



Training young men on animal husbandry methods in Pakistan (2019)

# KENYA

Mandera County in Kenya borders Somalia and Ethiopia and is particularly insecure with long, porous borders and the ever-present threat of Somalia-based terror groups, such as Al-Shabaab. Most people in Mandera County are Somali Kenyans who belong to a handful of clans. Some of the clans are large and powerful with networks that extend from the Port of Mogadishu to Nairobi and beyond. Customary clan leaders govern the clans in a hybrid governance arrangement with the Kenyan state, but their traditional power has gradually been eroded by the proliferation of weapons from Somalia and the rise of non-traditional authorities, such as armed groups. This has led to inter-clan disputes over access to land, water and pasture becoming very violent.

Islamic Relief has worked with the Mandera County Government and the clan system to build better relationships between law enforcement agencies, clan

elders, women and youth; improve inclusive conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes; and support technical and vocational skills development among Somali Kenyan youth. Altogether, 45 women and youth Peace Councils were set up across all seven sub-counties. All members of these Peace Councils were trained in dispute resolution and conflict prevention and set up a network of peers across different clans using WhatsApp to communicate incidents quickly before they escalated. When a dispute arose between two clans in Burmayo and Malkamari, the youth peace activists were the first to alert the authorities of the escalating dispute. Similarly when a land dispute in Gofa escalated the young peace activists were the first on the ground gathering information which was then reported to the authorities. These young peace activists have organised themselves and de-escalated many other clan disputes in Malkamari, Burmayo, Yedo, Gofa, Elwak and Olla too. Since young people are the first to be mobilised for violence, it is often young people who are also the first to hear about rising tensions through their peer networks, so they have a vital role to play in conflict prevention.



Peace football tournament for young men from conflicting clans in Mandera County, Kenya (2019)



The work of Mandera's youth peace councils in proactively reporting incidents and intervening early before the dispute can escalate has led to a reduction in inter-clan conflict in Banisa and Malkamari, which were previously conflict hotspots. It has also reduced human rights abuses against male Kenyan Somali youth by law enforcement officers and improved relations between law enforcement agencies and

local youth. This is evidenced in the independent baseline and midline assessments conducted for the programme by researchers from Coventry University. When the project started, 79% of respondents reported that incidents causing tension in the community were peacefully resolved through dialogue, but a year later this had increased to 90% of incidents being peacefully resolved.

**ABDI ADAN (MALE, AGE 30,  
REPRESENTATIVE OF EL WAK  
YOUTH PEACE COUNCIL)**

*"We the youth of Mandera County are having numerous challenges. Many among our folk die in conflict but with time, we hope things will change. Youth form the largest group in our society and the majority of the youth are unemployed. People with interest take advantage of the vulnerability of our youngsters. Despite many among us getting capacity building in conflict management, a majority still lack this opportunity"*

*"The IR peace project training has really helped us, mentored our youth, and now we are playing not only a significant peace role but also other community social support in our respective sub-county. We thought peace work remained the elders' task, [but] nowadays things are gradually changing and peace work is more a joint elder, faith leaders, youth, and women responsibility. The peace project that formed and trained our youth and women peace council will end and I believe our responsibility as youth peace champions will continue. The project has trained the groups but we are continuing peace work without the support of the project. We have addressed several intra- and inter-clan conflicts affecting our community. Yedo (inter-clan conflict in Yedo village) and Wargadud (inter-clan conflict over construction of a water pan) issues are some of the conflicts we have addressed in our sub-county. On a daily basis we address our internal youth issues and will continue whether or not we are supported by Government, civil society or other well-wishers."*



## LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Islamic Relief is an international charity based in the UK which operates in 40 countries worldwide. It provides humanitarian relief in many hard to reach areas, national and international advocacy on key global issues, development support to the poorest in society, and peace support to communities in fragile areas.
2. Tiyakap Kalilintad (Care for Peace) <http://tiyakapkalilintad.blogspot.com/2006/11/what-is-tiyakap-kalilintad.html>

Islamic Relief Worldwide  
19 Rea Street South  
Birmingham  
B5 6LB  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 121 605 5555

irw@irworldwide.org  
www.islamic-relief.org



Islamic Relief  
Worldwide



Islamic  
Relief  
Sweden





FÖR EN VÄRLD SOM BRYR SIG