



UGANDA MUSLIM YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FORUM (UMYDF)

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Contents



01
Message from The Executive Director

01



02
Strengthening Youth Voice and Civic Action for Peacebuilding in Uganda.

04



03
Women Preventing Violent Extremism

14



04
Bridges To Peace

22



05
Donors

34



01 *Message from* **The Executive Director**

In this year of extraordinary challenges, we at UMYDF have been unyielding in our commitment to our vision: the building of resilient and just communities. The landscape of peace and security has been fraught with difficulty, with our beloved country navigating a series of trials and tribulations.

We mourn the loss of over 100 Ugandans, victims of the terror inflicted by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). We have borne witness to political discord and intolerance, mysterious fatalities among prominent figures, disputes over land rights, and conflicts spurred by climate change, among other issues. The violent tremors in our neighboring countries - the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and South Sudan - have sent ripples across our borders, impacting our nation's peace and security.

In this complex environment, the significance of our work at UMYDF has been magnified. We have remained a steadfast beacon of hope, dedicating our efforts to nurturing enduring peace in Uganda and beyond. This year has been a crucible, allowing us to refine and innovate our methodologies, extend our reach to previously unexplored geographical areas and target groups, and implement three transformative projects.

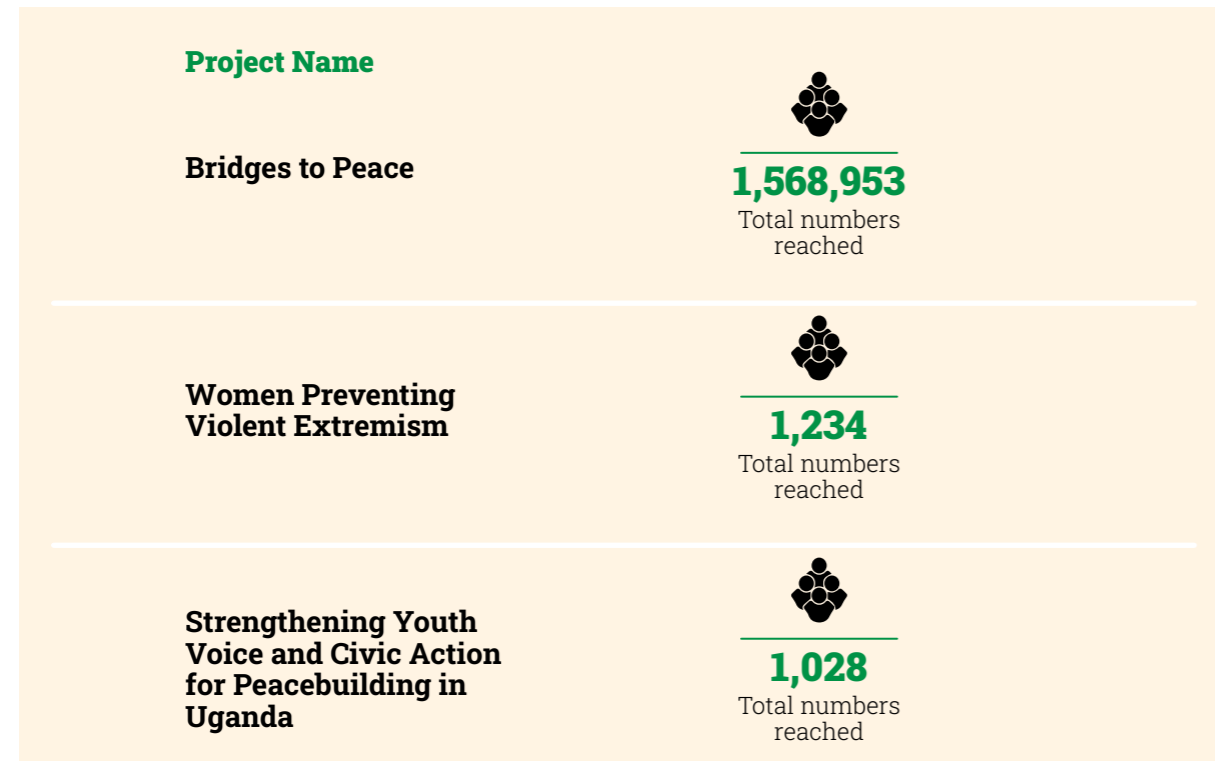
Through the Katwe Skills Centre, we have continued to effect change, empowering individuals through livelihood and economic opportunities. We have heightened vigilance against terrorism among Ugandans, raising

awareness of the perils of violent extremism and curbing support for such actions. We have fortified youth participation in civic life, enrolled budding peace practitioners in a comprehensive peacebuilding training program, and provided grants to 13 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to implement their vision for peace. We have enhanced peace education in schools, amplified the voices of terrorism victims, and nurtured young women in the field of peace and security, among other initiatives.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our benefactors, whose trust in our institution and unwavering support has been invaluable. We thank the Finn Church Aid (FCA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland for their continued support of the Strengthening Youth Voice and Civic Action project for the next three years. Our appreciation extends to the European Union, whose delegations in Uganda and Kenya have supported the implementation of the 18-month "Bridges to Peace" Project. We also acknowledge the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and Women in International Security Horn of Africa (WIIS-HOA) for their support of the Women Preventing Violent Extremism project, implemented under the Sisters without Borders (SWB) Network.

In the face of adversity, we stand resolute in our mission, our spirit unbroken, our resolve unshaken. We look forward to forging ahead, continuing our journey towards a peaceful, equitable future.

Our 2023 in numbers



13- sub grants awarded to CSOs

No.	Name of Organization	Amount received
1.	Kisoboka Africa (Lwengo district)	Euro 6,500
2.	The Masaka City NGO Forum's initiative (Masaka district)	Euro 6,500
3.	Beyond Uganda Ministries (Bugiri district)	Euro 6,500
4.	The Centre for Religious & Inter-Cultural Dialogue (Kampala district)	Euro 6,500
TOTAL		Euro 26,000
5.	Uganda Muslim Women Civilization Initiative	\$ 2,000
6.	Sisters for Peace	\$ 2,000
7.	Women Empowerment Initiative	\$ 2,000
8.	Uganda Muslim Women Vision	\$ 2,000
9.	Human Rights Defenders Masaka	\$ 2,000
10.	Redeemer Community Development Initiative	\$ 2,000
11.	Ideal Woman Community Based Organization	\$ 2,000
12.	Aliseka Women's Group	\$ 2,000
13.	Restoring Community Vision International	\$ 2,000
TOTAL		\$18,000

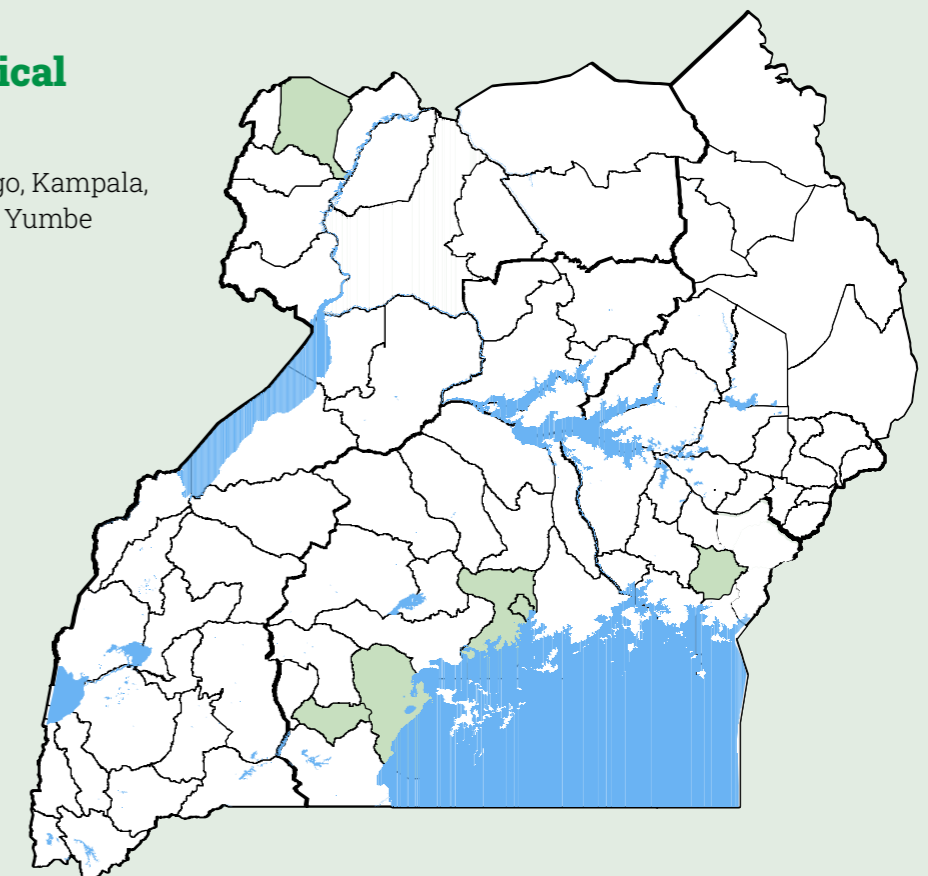
Categories of people reached

Community influencers, media actors, Salafi community, government institutions, civil society actors, returnees, secondary school students, University students, young women, women leaders, women in law enforcement, women in the military, religious leaders, Youth of faiths, Ghetto Youths.



Geographical coverage

Masaka, Lwengo, Kampala, Wakiso, Bugiri, Yumbe





02 Strengthening Youth Voice and Civic Action for Peacebuilding in Uganda.

With support from the Finn Church Aid and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, UMYDF is currently implementing a 3-year multi-faceted project with the overall goal of contributing to a peaceful Ugandan society where young men and women actively contribute to transformation of conflicts, maintenance of peace, and socio-economic development of their communities. The project's specific objectives include;

Improved capacity of Youth to lead actions against the root causes of conflict and violence in their communities by 2025.

Strengthened capacity of networks and youth-led organizations to participate in decision making and influence policy discourse by 2025.

Below are our 2023 highlights under the strengthening Youth Voice and Civic Action for Peace building project.

Enhanced capacity of Local duty bearers in state and non-state institutions to engage actively with the youth and play a more active role in enabling youth aspirations.

In its first year of implementation, the project has realized a number of milestones amidst a fragile context that has seen an increase in violence and conflicts spread in different parts of the country. The project has reached a total of 1028, (472 females and 556 males) through various activities that have included, capacity building sessions, dialogues, youth parliaments and trust building sporting activities.

Advancing Peace Education in Schools



In an effort to foster peace within educational environments, a series of Training of Trainers courses were held for Peace Club Patrons, Headteachers, and District Education Officers. The central aim of these courses was to furnish these key educators and mentors with the necessary tools and understanding to effectively impart peace education to students. Guided by a specialized peace education manual, participants delved into a variety of significant subjects, including distinguishing between conflict and violent conflict, and the importance of prevention; understanding and undertaking peacebuilding; recognizing and overcoming biases, prejudices, and stereotypes; appreciating dialogue, equality, and the perspectives of others; as well as embracing diversity and respect.

To maximize engagement and learning outcomes, interactive group discussions and Q&A sessions were implemented. Furthermore, educators were acquainted with the concept of Participatory Action Research (PAR) to foster a deeper comprehension of their schools and communities, identifying and addressing students' or communal needs through research and actionable change.

The training also underscored the importance of integrating legal frameworks related to youth into everyday school operations. Educators gained insights into how policy frameworks could be seamlessly incorporated into daily practices, reinforcing their role in nurturing peace within educational institutions.

Impact

This initiative has largely contributed to the long-term preservation of peace education, introducing educators to an array of supplementary resources to further their proficiency in peacebuilding and engagement with young people. Through the adoption of interactive teaching methodologies—such as incorporating videos, exercises, and role-plays—teachers have been able to enhance the learning experience. These strategies not only elevate student participation and understanding of curricula, but also cultivate vital traits like confidence, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging among learners.

In particular, several educators and school administrators have embraced these innovative teaching methods. Mr. Ssekulima of Katwe S.S, Bwayo of Old Kampala S.S, and Mr. Katumba at Kansanga Seed are among those who have successfully integrated these approaches to empower students beyond traditional educational boundaries. Such methods also promote critical thought, empowering students to differentiate between constructive and destructive behaviors, thereby reducing their vulnerability to violent ideologies.

An illustrative success from this initiative has been the integration of

peace club concepts into school processes and policies, transitioning from a one-sided rule system to a more reciprocal rights and responsibilities framework. This new approach, as suggested by patrons at Katwe Noor SS, fosters a more balanced and peaceful relationship between teachers and students, empowering student representation in administrative roles and promoting shared responsibilities for maintaining a clean and harmonious school environment, as seen in the littering solution campaign inspired by the hummingbird story at Kololo SS.



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Mobilizing communities for peaceful actions

On April 12, 2023, a Community Peace Club was established in Kisenyi 3 one of Kampala's violence hotspots with the objective of contesting the belief that violence is an inherent aspect of human nature. Furthermore, this initiative aims to provide its members with the skills necessary for non-violent conflict resolution. The club's mission is to unite young people, youth leaders, youth mentors, and representatives from the local council to promote a culture of peace and recuperation within the Kisenyi 3 community in Kampala.



Peace Education Initiatives Thrive in Kampala and Yumbe Districts

In 2023, peace clubs flourished across 8 Kampala and Yumbe district schools with 412 students participating in peace education trainings. With the goal to enhance conflict resolution skills and civic participation among youth, the program engaged schools such as Highland SS, Valley View SS, and Kololo SS. Customized interactive sessions were led by UMYDF staff and trained educators, focusing on cooperation, conflict resolution, and community action.



Impact

Impactful results included the promotion of peaceful disciplinary measures in schools, leadership development with peace club members holding key student council positions, and steps towards religious tolerance and inclusive worship. Initiatives like the one inspired by Old Kampala Secondary School students, who established a peace club at Hawa Secondary School, are a testament to the model's success in nurturing responsible future leaders and instilling a culture of peace.

Peace Learning Center Cultivates Agents of Change

This year, the Peace Learning Center hosted a successful peace building training program for youth practitioners, engaging 40 participants in transformative courses aimed at quelling violent conflicts. The diverse group, consisting of 17 females and 23 males, engaged in 5 key courses designed to equip them with a thorough understanding of peace building and conflict resolution. Trainees not only gained insights into resolving disputes and fostering interfaith harmony, but also developed practical skills to tackle the underpinnings of violence.

Impact

Significantly, at least half of these young peacebuilders have already implemented these newfound skills in their workplaces and communities, taking proactive steps such as voluntary work and establishing peace clubs. Their personal stories, including constructive dialogues about religious differences at home, underscore the program's positive impact. With the completion of the 5-course curriculum, i.e., Introduction to Peace building and Conflict Resolution, Religion and Peace building, Youth Peace and Security Studies, Preventing Violent Extremism, Mediation and Conflict Resolution Skills, these young leaders are now poised to champion peace and understanding across various sectors of society.

Equipping Tomorrow's Workforce: 80 Youths from Vulnerable Communities Receive Job and Business Skills Training



In a transformative initiative, 80 vulnerable young individuals from violence-prone neighborhoods in Katwe, Kisenyi, Nabisalu, Katanga, Banda, Rubaga, Mengo, Makindye, and Kinawataka received a comprehensive six-month training program aimed at improving their career prospects and community participation. At the Katwe Skills Centre, participants underwent vocational training in tailoring and electrical wiring, complemented by career guidance, counselling, and life skills support. An entrepreneurial component equipped them with business acumen and helped them create solid business plans, while peace education was integrated throughout their time at the centre.



In collaboration with the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), UMYDF facilitated the trainees' registration and assessment, which culminated in 69 trainees achieving official certification. Out of the graduates, 25 have already begun earning incomes through their respective trades—14 in tailoring and 11 in electrical work. Furthermore, six individuals have ventured into entrepreneurship, with half operating from commercial premises and the other half from home-based setups.

Post-training, the youths participated in internships as a further step in honing their skills and familiarizing themselves with advanced work techniques. These internships served as a bridge to potential employment opportunities, with hopes of some trainees being retained by their host companies. The program also instilled a financial management mindset, encouraging those who haven't yet launched their own businesses to save strategically from their earnings and eventually finance their entrepreneurial dreams.





Empowering Generations: Bridging the Gap for Youth Inclusion in Governance”

A significant training session aimed at enhancing the involvement of young people in decision-making processes was attended by 80 participants, comprising youth leaders, local councilors, and community leaders, of equal gender representation. The age range of attendees spanned from 25 to 68 years. The training's main goal was to increase the understanding and capability of duty bearers to integrate youth in policy and decision-making areas effectively.

responsibilities tied to facilitating youth involvement. Additionally, there was a collective push to consolidate initiatives for youth engagement and establish an overarching framework for investments in youth inclusion efforts.

Post-training initiatives saw sub county leaders sharing knowledge and advocating for youth participation in local research, identifying community resources to address youth challenges, and advocating engagement among elders and religious leaders to tackle various social issues.

Key objectives outlined in the training were to bolster the understanding of inclusion strategies and the specific roles and



60 Young Leaders Trained in Civic Rights and Responsibilities

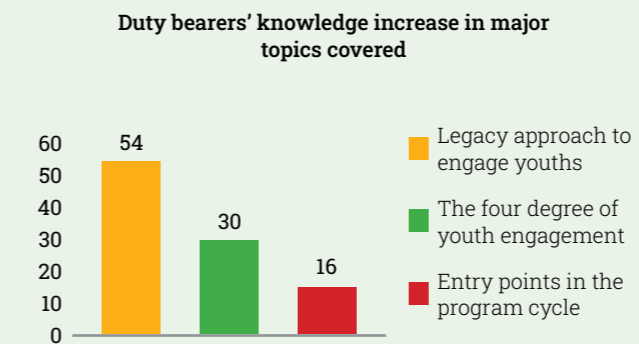


In a significant stride toward peacebuilding, 60 young individuals have been empowered with essential knowledge and skills concerning their civic rights, duties, and responsibilities. Through interactive workshops, these youths discovered the importance of their voices and actions in shaping a peaceful and progressive society. They learned about their capability not only to foster peace and development but also to challenge and reshape unfair policies. With 80% of the participants expressing a keen interest in becoming ambassadors, the initiative promises to cultivate a wave of proactive youth dedicated to informing others about their rights and encouraging community engagement. These determined young leaders are setting forth on a mission

to advocate for policies aimed at improving the lives and prospects of the youth population.

Impact

The outcome of these sessions resulted in a transformation of relationships between youths, state and non-state actors, evolving from distant to open and trusting interactions. The newfound rapport established a conducive environment for information exchange, freedom of interaction, and even confidential discussions. Furthermore, youth leaders have continued outreach by actively mingling with the youth in communal spaces, fostering a mentorship culture and encouraging continuous engagement.



“Shaping the Future Together: The Power of Debate to Champion Youth Inclusion in Decision-Making”

During the live radio debates, 100 youths, including leaders and organization representatives from both the settlement and host community, discussed issues of youth participation in decision-making, misinformation in the era of social media, and its impact on peacebuilding. These discussions were broadcast live on Ribat FM in Yumbe and Pearl FM in Kampala, allowing a wider audience of young people to call in and voice their concerns. As a result, Yumbe district youth leaders and networks chose three issues for collective advocacy. Further discussions led youths to commit to pushing for policy changes to increase

their inclusion at local and national levels, with a focus on amplifying female voices. Proposed actions include amending the National Youth Council Act to include youth leaders from refugee settlements in district activities, advocating for affirmative action for female representation on youth councils, and suggesting a by-law to regulate discotheques and gaming halls to reduce youth delinquency. The chairpersons of the refugee welfare council will address these suggestions to relevant authorities in writing, while the Yumbe district youth chairperson will bring them up in forthcoming meetings.



Sports as an avenue for building trust between youth and duty bearers

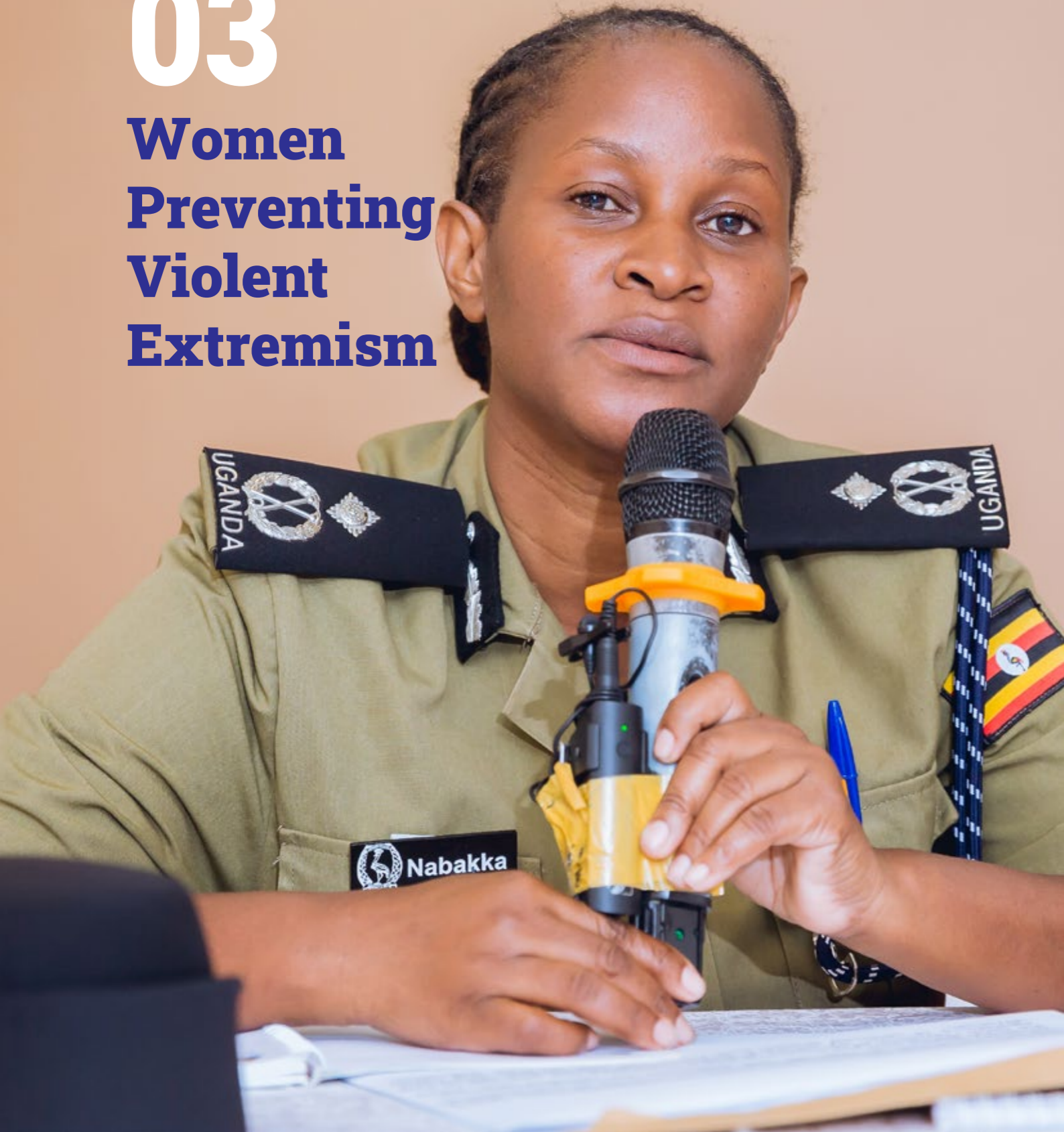
Breaking away from traditional dialogues, friendly sports events provide an innovative approach to fostering strong bonds and unity within communities. With 197 participants, including 76 females and 121 males, these events serve as unconventional platforms for trust-building and advocacy for youth inclusion in decision-making. Youth leaders and community members engage in games like soccer, netball, matatu, and Ludo with local and national decision-makers. This initiative is viewed as a cornerstone for trust, leadership, and confidence-building, promoting a more inclusive role for youth in policy-making.

One of the key state and non-state actors revealed that;

In a harmonious display of camaraderie, I gratefully acknowledge UMYDF for bridging the gap between leaders and youth, dispelling fear and stigma. My opponent, though rarely interacted with, engaged me not as a superior, but as an equal. This newfound rapport promises a future where youths won't shy away from us in times of trouble. The game, a testament to my rigorous training, was a refreshing mental exercise. We, the duty bearers, triumphed with a 2-1 score, a peaceful contest that brought me immense joy. (District Councilor, Yumbe District)

03

Women Preventing Violent Extremism



The Women Preventing Violent Extremism project, managed by Sisters Without Borders and coordinated by Women in International Security Horn of Africa, is funded by the United States Institute of Peace. This initiative aims to boost the capabilities of women and their organizations to carry out effective Counter/Prevent Violent Extremism (P/CVE) actions based on community input. It also seeks to enhance women's impact on strategies and policies aimed at countering violent extremism at both community and national levels.

To date, the project has engaged 626 women and 123 men across Kampala, Masaka, and Bugiri districts. Several member organizations of Sisters Without Borders, including Uganda Muslim Women Civilization Initiative, Sisters for Peace, and others, have been awarded grants of \$2000 each. These funds support women-centered P/CVE efforts within their respective communities.

Highlights

The Plight of Victims of Terrorism in Uganda- Seeking Sustained Support and Effective Government Strategies



The problem

The recent rise in terrorist attacks within the nation has led to an upsurge in victim numbers. Notably, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) carried out a series of devastating attacks—claiming seven lives and injuring 37 people from August to November 2021. In the current year, the intensity of ADF assaults in Uganda has increased, including the horrifying attack at Rubiriha Secondary School in Mpondwe Kasese district on June 16th, where 42 students tragically perished, and the October attacks directed at tourists in Queen Elizabeth National Park. Since the surge in ADF attacks in 2021, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of terrorism victims in Uganda.



Despite efforts to combat terrorism in Uganda, victims often do not receive adequate attention. While they predominantly consist of ordinary people from various cultural and religious backgrounds, the government does provide some support post-attack including medical care, reassurance through public statements, investigations, prosecutions, and monetary compensation for funeral expenses and care. Legislation has also been introduced to tackle the issue. Nonetheless, the victims face enduring physical, social, and economic hardships that go beyond immediate assistance, indicating a need for continued and comprehensive support to ensure their full recovery and integration into society as part of the overall counter-terrorism strategy.

In November, a significant advocacy workshop took place centering on women affected by terrorism and key government stakeholders. The event had several goals: to raise awareness of the experiences of women affected by terrorism and advocate for their rights, to push for sustained and complete support that aids their healing and legal pursuits, to facilitate meaningful discussions around victims' rights with a focus on their recovery and support systems, and to recommend enhancements in government counter-terrorism strategies, incorporating insights from those who have experienced terrorism directly.



“Empowerment in the Wake of Terror: UMYDF’s New Dawn for Support and Recognition of Female Victims”

The advocacy workshop successfully brought the struggles of women victims of terrorism back into the public spotlight and onto the government’s agenda. Key stakeholders—including police, military personnel, government officials, and the victims themselves—created a productive dialogue to address the rights of these women. Commitments for action were made, such as a pledge from the UPDF representative to push for more comprehensive victim support and from Hon. Muwanga Kivumbi to allocate a national budget for terrorism victims.

Additionally, a consensus was reached to establish the first-ever Victims of Terrorism Association in Uganda, aiming to unify the

victims, advocate for their rights, and counter extremist narratives. This initiative is being spearheaded by SWB, which has also been invited to discuss the establishment of a terrorism victims fund with the Speaker of Parliament.

The workshop emphasized accountability from military and police towards the care of terrorism victims as well as raising global citizen awareness about their plight. Some recommendations from the workshop include the creation of victim assistance funds, amendments to legal acts to better protect these victims, and the suggestion for spiritual support avenues for victim rehabilitation.



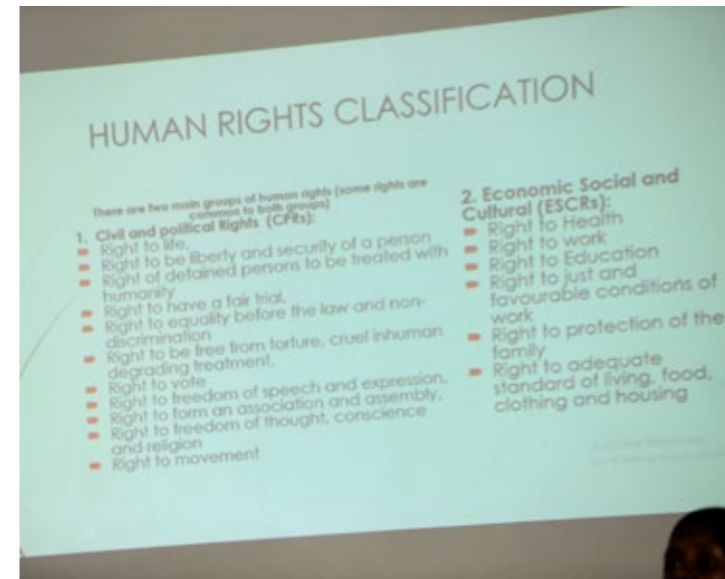
Building careers in Peace and Security

On December 7, 2023, Sisters Without Borders (SWB) hosted a symposium in Kampala aimed at expanding networking opportunities for women in the peace and security field. The event, live-streamed by the Uganda Youth and Development Forum (UMYDF), gathered emerging university women, civil society members, and academics to discuss women's roles in peace and security, celebrate progress, address challenges, and seek solutions. With an on-site attendance of 30 engaged participants, the symposium sought to empower women to join and lead in peace and security, against the backdrop of the disproportionate impact of violent conflicts on women and in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Despite recognized advancements, the convening underscored the continuing underrepresentation of women in peacebuilding, including their participation in peacekeeping, law enforcement, and the military.

As a result, the symposium highlighted the critical role women play in conflict prevention and peace-building, emphasizing the need for their increased involvement. Currently, female representation is low, as seen with only 7,700 of 43,000 police officers being women. A notable example with a substantial contribution to peace and security is Proscovia Nalweyiso, a high-ranking military officer in Uganda. Various career opportunities in peace-related activities were presented, from research and media to negotiation and advocacy. The initiative proposed creating an association for young women in peace and security at university level to enhance knowledge sharing and support. Additionally, the symposium provided a forum for knowledge exchange and intergenerational dialogue, with invitations extended for career exposure visits to military and law enforcement facilities.



Salafi Women Embrace Active Citizenship and Community Service



Civic participation and engagement training programs by SWB partners have sparked a significant increase in community involvement among Salafi women, who previously lacked interest in such activities. These women are now actively participating in elections, advocacy, community planning meetings, and various forms of community service. They have taken on responsibilities such as fundraising and collecting resources to support the vulnerable in their communities, recognizing their own power to effect change without relying on external assistance. As a result, these initiatives have successfully cultivated a spirit of active citizenship within the Salafi Muslim women community.

Policy influence at the local level.

It's significant to note that the project initiatives which focused on engaging local authorities, such as connecting Salafi Women with governmental programs and financial opportunities like the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Fund, the Youth Livelihood Fund, and the Parish Development Model, are anticipated to influence the distribution of these resources. These efforts are expected to ensure that fund allocation becomes more inclusive, addressing the needs and considerations of underrepresented groups. Officials from Masaka and Bugiri have

acknowledged in their statements that Salafi Women are encouraged to form collectives to take advantage of these funds. Concerns previously held about loans and interest rates have been mitigated following discussions, and subsequent council meetings are set to address and potentially revise policies accordingly. This adjustment at the local government level could represent a shift towards more supportive policy measures for marginalized women who might otherwise be susceptible to involvement in violent extremist activities.



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Enhancing National Peace Efforts: Contributions to Uganda's P/CVE Strategy



This year's endeavors have significantly advanced the execution of Uganda's National Strategy on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism. By engaging in a variety of key initiatives, our efforts bolstered five of the thirteen foundational pillars outlined in the country's strategic action plan.

Prominent among these initiatives were informative radio programs spearheaded by the Redeemer Community in Masaka and Restoring Community Vision International in Bugiri. These programs addressed a core objective within the strategy by developing and promoting a communication strategy designed to counter violent extremist (VE) ideology with alternative narratives.

Further supporting the national strategy, the Uganda Muslim Women Civilizations Initiatives and the Redeemer Community dedicated their work to fortifying pillar five, focusing on the empowerment of youth and communities facing socio-economic adversities.

Additionally, the Uganda Muslim Women Vision and the UMYDF (Uganda Muslim Youth Development Foundation) made meaningful strides in civic education and fostering a comprehension of human rights among women and young adults. These efforts were in direct support of priority area four, aimed at reinforcing the pillars of good governance, human rights, and the rule of law within the community.

Collectively, these activities underscore our commitment to supporting and actualizing the vital mission of the national P/CVE strategy, contributing to a safer and more resilient society.

"Enhanced Political Engagement for Women's Role in Preventing Violent Extremism"

During this year, there has been significant engagement of political leaders in nearly 90% of the initiatives. Politicians recognize the important role women can play in the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) and in shaping related policies. They acknowledge that previous stereotypes framing women only as peaceful contributors have restricted their involvement in peace and security policy discussions. Politically-driven solutions to involve women in reducing violent extremism have been proposed. For instance, the RCC of Masaka

has urged Salafi women, who traditionally undervalue education, to educate their children through government schools or by utilizing state house bursaries. Furthermore, the government's approval of Islamic Banking is seen as a potential pathway to financial growth for marginalized Muslim communities. Following a dialogue, the Salafi women met independently to discuss their preferred programs, organized themselves into groups, and planned to meet with district leaders to initiate the necessary procedures.

Fostering Synergy among CSOs and Government on Women's Role in Climate Action and Peacebuilding"

The Woman Empowerment Institute held a workshop that enhanced understanding among CSOs and government decision makers about the interconnection between climate change, conflict, and women's roles in climate action for peacebuilding. A recommendations paper was created, with expectations that its insights will be spread through various channels including a validation workshop. This should lead to more gender-inclusive program and activity planning within

these organizations, benefiting the broader community. Although the workshop's direct impact remains unmeasured, it is hoped that the recommendations will guide stakeholders to more actively and meaningfully involve women in climate action and peacebuilding. Additionally, a tree planting activity led by the Aliseka Women's Community Group in Bugiri district saw the planting of over 2000 trees, with collaboration from local authorities and the community.

"Women Trekkers Peace Platform: Pioneering Female Leadership in Countering Violent Extremism in Bugiri District"

The Women Trekkers Peace Platform, based in Bugiri district, is a group that highlights the important role women can play in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). It has a 9-member executive team consisting of women leaders from various sectors such as religious organizations, business, markets, activism, and politics. The platform is proactive in teaching women to recognize early signs of radicalization and understand

the risks of violent extremism. It also strives to generate economic opportunities for young women and girls, while offering support to those impacted by violent extremism. The group has increased the visibility of women's efforts in P/CVE through radio programs and community outreach activities, making their contributions known in both community and local government circles.

04 Bridges To Peace



The “Bridges to Peace” Project is an uplifting initiative championed by the European Union, the Kofi Annan Foundation, and the Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum. This collaborative effort proactively strengthens communities against violent extremism with several key strategies. It raises community awareness and readiness in areas vulnerable to extremism, equips people at risk with the tools to counteract radical narratives, improves civil society organizations’ (CSOs) strategies for managing extremism threats, and bolsters national efforts in rehabilitating ex-combatants. By comprehensively addressing the roots of extremism, the project fosters a more peaceful and resilient society. The project is implemented in districts of Kampala, Masaka, Lwengo and Bugiri.

Background

In 2021, Uganda witnessed the worst deterioration in the Global Terrorism Index since 2015, primarily due to the Allied Democratic Forces’ terrorist activities. These attacks killed 7 and injured 37, with ISIS claiming the assailants as part of their ranks. The ADF’s influence stems from exploiting religious, social, and economic grievances for recruitment. The government’s countermeasures are heavily militaristic, with insufficient attention to the underlying community grievances that fuel ADF’s growth or to the reintegration of former ADF members. Civil society initiatives against extremism suffer from a lack of resources and a narrow approach that fails to tackle the root causes. The ADF’s sophisticated attacks and recruitment strategies, along with the government and civil society’s limited response, highlight the need for a more comprehensive and proactive approach to counter violent extremism in Uganda.

Reducing support for Violent Extremism in Uganda

This year's project initiatives have significantly enhanced vigilance and resilience against violent extremist ideologies among participants and their communities. The program's success extended beyond those directly trained, influencing the broader community through public awareness efforts that highlighted the dangers of aligning with extremist groups. The impact of the project has been considerable and far-reaching, with

numerous participants actively disseminating their new insights to family and community members. A notable instance of this ripple effect was observed when 12 returnee leaders, who were part of the residential training, successfully engaged 67 relatives and 40 community members in a subsequent economic empowerment project.

Awareness creation on VE

Introducing "Mifumbi" The Undercover Agent,"

A participatory radio drama series designed to educate the public on the dangers of joining extremist groups, achieved significant outreach. Averaging over 1.5 million listeners per episode across a 20-day broadcast span, the series exceeded its audience engagement goals and sparked vital discussions on the perils of extremism. Complementing the radio series, exhibitions featuring narratives from

former extremists and terrorism survivors further heightened awareness and promoted community participation in countering violent extremism (CVE). Additionally, live drama events in Bugiri and Kampala districts saw active involvement from 301 individuals, ranging from 14 to 65 years old, demonstrating the initiative's broad appeal and impact in fostering CVE engagement.



Amplifying victims' and returnee's voices in P/CVE

In an effort to raise awareness about the impact of violent extremism, 30 video testimonies from returnees and victims were recorded, emphasizing the vulnerability of all community members to such threats and the importance of recognizing radicalization signs. The screenings of these stories in four districts reached 837 attendees, who showed eagerness to disseminate the knowledge gained. Recognizing the significance of

advocating for victims' rights, KAF and UMYDF are incorporating this focus into their second-year project plans. UMYDF has already included this aspect in an advocacy workshop, part of their "Women in preventing violent extremism" project, where women victims shared their experiences with key government officials, advocating for comprehensive support for victims' recovery and justice.

Capacity Building

Empowering CSOs in P/CVE

Capacity building and knowledge exchange workshops have effectively empowered 28 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in areas prone to violent extremism (VE). These workshops covered various topics, including VE dynamics, prevention and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) strategies, economic empowerment, and civic engagement. Post-training, four CSOs, one from each project district, received grants to implement P/CVE initiatives, showing early signs of reducing violence support. Activities will proceed until February 2024, with CSOs now playing a more proactive role in P/CVE in their communities. Specific CSO initiatives demonstrate the practical application of the training. Kisoboka Africa is enhancing economic resilience among marginalized youth in Lwengo, while the Masaka City NGO Forum focuses on P/CVE vigilance involving families. Beyond Uganda Ministries in Bugiri emphasizes entrepreneurship skills linked to local government programs, and the Centre for Religious & Inter-Cultural Dialogue in Kampala educates on cultural and religious diversity to counter divisive narratives. These projects reflect a successful multiplication of P/CVE efforts, with 91% of CSOs taking action, and a strong potential for sustainability in tackling VE.



Fighting recidivism through capacitating Returnee leaders

Capacity-building activities also benefited at-risk groups. 12 returnee leaders participated in a three-day residential training in Masaka District, which increased their capacity to resist the temptation to return to extremist activities and their knowledge of non-violent approaches to solving their problems. As a result, 83% of them reported increased hope and an improved strategy for action to address their challenges.



Community influencers leading efforts to P/CVE

The P/CVE capacities of community influencers and media actors have also been strengthened through training which has resulted in them using their platforms to contribute to efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism and to challenge VE propaganda.

UMYDF staff capacities to Reintegrating former extremists enhanced

The capacities of project staff to rehabilitate and reintegrate terrorists were strengthened through four knowledge exchange workshops with five NGOs specializing in DRR. Project team members also benefited from 4 counselling sessions conducted by Strong Minds Uganda, and 2 Independent Counsellors during the first year of project implementation.



Re-thinking peace through social economic empowerment- A case of the Salafi Muslim Minorities

A total of 120 hardline Salafi leaders, split evenly between youth and women, underwent two days of non-residential training aimed at bolstering their resistance to violence. The sessions focused on understanding violent extremism and promoting peaceful resolutions to issues. Post-training evaluations indicated a notable shift towards non-violent methods for socio-economic and political challenges, with unanimous support from women and nearly all youth. Participants also demonstrated enhanced knowledge of resilience strategies against violence. There was a significant movement towards economic empowerment and engagement with government socio-economic development programs among the Salafi community members involved.



Transforming Media Narratives: Training Journalists to Counter Violent Extremism Responsibly”

In the realm of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), the media’s role is pivotal. Yet, at the onset, this understanding was largely absent among the media personnel. None had ever consciously pursued any P/CVE actions. Journalists, assembled for a specialized training, were oblivious to the potential peril of inadvertently propelling the narratives of violent extremists through their reporting. The tenets of responsible journalism, particularly in the context of reporting on terrorism, were inadequately grasped by the participants. This was true even for seasoned journalists who had reported on significant terror incidents or those with extensive experience in the field.

Post-training, a monitoring exercise was conducted to assess the impact of the training on the participants. Feedback was gathered from 17 out of the 20 media personnel involved in the training, consisting of 5 women and 12 men. The results were encouraging. As many as 82% of the participants had integrated P/CVE into their work in various ways.

They raised awareness about violent

extremism, its risk factors, and the inherent dangers it posed. They conducted in-depth research on violent extremism and related cases, contributing to a broader understanding of the issue. Their reporting began to underscore a commitment to non-violence, with articles advocating for peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Furthermore, they reached out to individuals and families affected by violent extremism, providing them with a platform to share their experiences. This not only humanized the issue but also highlighted the real-life consequences of violent extremism.

In essence, the training had a transformative effect on the participants. It equipped them with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage responsibly in P/CVE. The media personnel, once unaware of their potential role in countering violent extremism, emerged as informed advocates of peace and non-violence, using their platforms to counter extremist narratives and promote peaceful coexistence.



Promoting cultural and religious tolerance

Interfaith Exhibitions

The initiative made significant strides in advancing cultural and religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue this year. Hardline Salafi women and youth leaders, historically resistant to such engagement, took part in discussions with other faith leaders, indicating a newfound openness. The project also hosted four interfaith exhibitions, which

were attended by 2,700 people, introducing many to their first experience of religious diversity and debunking myths about various beliefs. This exposure has led to increased interactions between Salafi leaders and individuals from different faith backgrounds, fostering connections through business mentorship and civic involvement.





Mainstreaming youth and gender in P/CVE

The project has focused on youth and gender equality in Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), particularly in Uganda where the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) predominantly recruit young people. Research indicates that Salafi Muslim youth and women in the Greater Masaka region are highly susceptible to ADF recruitment. Women have been integral to the ADF, serving in combat and support roles and more recently, to propagate the next generation of fighters. In response, Bridges to Peace has tailored its CVE programs to empower these at-risk groups, fostering their capacity for positive community influence. The initiative addresses the unique challenges faced by Salafi women, such as

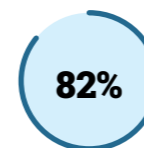
low confidence, by focusing on personal resilience and providing gender-sensitive training environments. Gender balance and the incorporation of women's experiences are prioritized across project activities, including media outreach.

UMYDF effectively engaged with youth leaders to ensure the active participation of young individuals in project initiatives, such as radio dramas and inter-faith exhibitions. They emphasized youth involvement in both planning and execution phases, while also persuading religious authorities to endorse young representatives for faith-related events.

Democracy, Governance and P/CVE

This year, our endeavor to embed democratic values and good governance within our counter-violence initiatives has been strategic and impactful. The stark findings from the 2019 BRICS study on the ADF's disdain for democracy in Eastern Uganda underscored the urgency of our mission. We responded by meticulously integrating these themes across eight thought-provoking training sessions for 120 Salafi women and youth leaders. The curriculum, rich with discussions on power, youth and women's empowerment, and civic involvement, served to cultivate a robust understanding of democratic engagement. This educational journey has not only heightened their awareness of societal issues but has also equipped them to be proactive, informed citizens committed to the tenets of democracy.

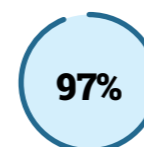
Our results in a nutshell



82% of media actors involved have engaged in P/CVE work in different ways



95% of the influencers engaged have used their platforms to contribute to P/CVE



97% of the salafi youth surveyed supported non-violent approaches to addressing socio-economic grievances



51 women leaders have demonstrated an increased focus on economic empowerment at individual and group levels

The feedback obtained from **17** of the **20** media actors involved (**5** females and **12** males) shows that **82%** have engaged in P/CVE work in different ways by: Creating awareness on violent extremism, its risk factors and dangers, and by carrying out research on VE and VE-related cases. Adopting reporting that emphasizes and strengthens commitment to non-violence with articles advocating for peaceful conflict resolution. Reaching out, supporting and collecting experiences of individuals and families affected by VE.

95% of the influencers engaged have used their platforms to contribute to P/CVE. They have created awareness on VE through their platforms. Muslim religious leaders have diversified their messages while giving sermons; they now give hope to the Muslims facing challenges in order to build their social resilience and advise them towards hard work and economic empowerment. Those with access to more Muslim leaders have reached out, calling upon them to join the P/CVE efforts. Two participants are dealing with some of the root causes of the problem, i.e. one in Lwengo tackling unemployment and another in Bugiri educating at-risk children at his primary school.

73% of the Salafi women who were previously inclined to use violence to achieve political goals changed their perspective after the training, which introduced them to peacebuilding through accelerated civic participation and engagement.

At baseline, **97%** of the salafi youth surveyed supported non-violent approaches to addressing socio-economic grievances, while **38%** supported violence to achieve political goals, with a slight majority (**54%**) of these respondents being female. After the training, **97%** of the Salafi youth trainees still supported non-violent approaches to achieving socio-economic goals and the proportion of respondents supporting violence as a means of achieving political goals fell to **21%**.

51 women leaders have demonstrated an increased focus on economic empowerment at individual and group levels. It is worth noting that interest and confidence in economic empowerment for a Salafi woman - especially a married one - is significant because many wait for provisions from their husbands. 2023 activities have boosted the women leaders' confidence and have improved their leadership



20

women leaders have reported various milestones in their economic empowerment journey

skills. They have taught their fellow women and those they meet at different forums about the lessons on socioeconomic empowerment and non-violence.

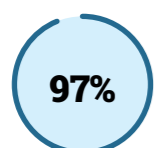
More than **20** women leaders have reported various milestones in their economic empowerment journey, including improved bookkeeping and management of their businesses, diversified income sources, and improved saving culture. Some have also been inspired to acquire new skills and explore new markets. Among these, **7** have started new income generating projects after the training. Majority have ventured into chicken rearing and the most outstanding leader in Masaka is at her second stock of 100 chickens. Other groups have invested in goats, crafts, growing coffee and more.

15 joint cash-round ventures have been re-energized to allow women access to business capital



15

joint cash-round ventures have been re-energized to allow women access to business capital



97%

of the 49 participants among the Salafi Youth who have provided feedback demonstrated increased self-confidence

3 joint investment ventures have been initiated and two more groups are still doing business research to establish which project to invest in. One such group reached out to the faith leader from the Pentecostal church they met during the activity for further consultation on how to make

chalk, vaseline, paper bags and more products.

Salafi women have demonstrated increased civic engagement and interest in government development programs; one leader in Bugiri has so far benefited from the Parish Development Model and along with others from the training, the women in Bugiri and Masaka are in the process of formulating and registering their development group to benefit from other government opportunities.

97% of the **49** participants among the Salafi Youth (**20** females, **29** males) who have provided feedback demonstrated increased self-confidence, having understood that they have power to bring about change, and have taken steps towards socioeconomic development through peaceful approaches. Participants from all the districts have actively taken action.

Those with access to platforms within the Salafi community have diversified the contents of their speeches and sermons to include peacebuilding and development. Some use these platforms to offer business management advice and to emphasize the importance of socioeconomic development in sustainable peacebuilding. As a response to the lack of youth leadership structure and programmes within mosques, **10** mosque-based



29

youth economic development programmes have been initiated

youth committees have been formed or strengthened to serve the interests of youths holistically. At national level, youth leaders from Jamuiyat Daawat Slafiyya have embarked on restructuring the Jamuiyyat Tabligh Daawat Salafiyya (JTDS) National Youth Council to make it more inclusive and responsive to Salafi youth needs. This was a result of inspiration from the youth leaders of other faiths whom they exchanged with. The book entitled 'The Mosque' previously published by UMYDF has been revised with support from UMYDF and adopted by these Salafi leaders as a guide to the restructuring process. New leadership has been established in Kampala, Mukono and Wakiso districts based on this guide. Motivated by the training and exchange with other faith groups, the JTDS Youth leaders are also working on developing a strategic development plan. In addition, the training created a networking platform for the young leaders who started working together on several income generating projects.

29 youth economic development programmes have been initiated, including group saving



300

The number of birds at a chicken rearing project led by young leaders from Masaka

schemes for joint investment, skills mapping to identify opportunities for apprenticeship, and mosque-savings on income. To date, the most outstanding project is a chicken rearing project led by young leaders from Masaka which has entered its second phase with **300** birds. Other ventures include growing ground nuts, watermelons, carrots, spinach, selling maize, and rearing ducks and goats. These saving groups also serve a social support function when members meet. Lastly, the Salafi youths have also demonstrated increased civic engagement. Some have volunteered to safeguard their communities. One young leader advised his mosque committee to undertake participatory action research on the issue of redundant youths and has successfully supported over **20** youths into employment. Others have offered to share not only what they learnt during the project engagements but also their own skills and have reached out to other community members irrespective of their faith to participate in voluntary community service commonly known as 'bulungi bwansi' or 'for the good of the country'.

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