NATIONAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT OF MOSQUES AND IMAMS IN UGANDA
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment report on vulnerability of Mosques and Imams in Uganda was done as part of Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum (UMYDF) work to counter violent extremism (CVE) in Uganda and the region. UMYDF has in the past engaged with various stakeholders, addressing various topical issues especially youth, Imams and women related to use of social media to counter violent extremism, transformation of mosques as development centers, and the creation of a national Survivors center to support those affected by terrorism.

As part of its wider efforts to counter violent extremism, and transform Mosques into development centres, UMYDF conducted this assessment, to analyze the extent to which the mosques are vulnerable to ideologies of extremism of Sectarian hatred and Intolerance.

The assessment focused on the ideological Inclination of the mosques, as well as the systematization of Madrasa teaching, the quality of the training in Madrasas, as well as quality of leadership and outreach programs in the mosques among others. The study further sought to analyze the level of education of the tutors at Madrasas, as well as the level of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) integration in their congregational communications and engagement. This report also explored governance themes and highlights areas for developing better governance and improving the quality of religious leadership in mosques.

The study finds that the mosques are using limited ICT tools, with all of the 18 mosques interviewed only using WhatsApp, as mode of communication and engagement to the congregants, or Ummah. Further, none of the mosques has a dispute resolution mechanism, none has a database of members, none includes women and youth in its programming, and none is registered. The levels of education of the Imams, as well as Madrasa tutors, is low, at highest level being A-Level (Thannawi), secondary school qualification, and even this, with only 3 tutors having A-Level qualification, and only 3 Imams having A-Level of education. On the ideological inclination of the mosques, the study establishes 3 Shia Mosques, 6 Saalafi Mosques and the other 9, are Sunni Muslims. The study also finds that the outreach channel existent in 13 of the 18 Mosques is on faith related activities only, with only three mosques having youth and women focus as outreach channel. On the issue of Madrasa, whereas all Mosques interviewed had Madrasas, none of them had a written curriculum and basic early childhood standards. Further, on the issue of governance, none of the mosques is registered with the Muslim council leadership, and neither are any of the Mosques in possession of a constitution, or dispute resolution mechanism or a database system of congregates. Finally, the study finds that on the issue of financing, 13 of the 18 Mosques depend on donor financing to run Islamic affairs, while the other 5 only have self-financing as sources of support.

The results above indicate a gap in knowledge offered to congregants, and hence, possibility of extremist ideologies or sectarian ideologies to permeate the Mosque, since the level of knowledge of the Imams and Tutors are very low. Further, the poor governance structures, evidenced by lack of registration, lack of constitutions, data base system of congregates and lack of dispute resolution mechanisms, all lead to cracks in the mosque, and ultimately, can lead to vulnerability to extremist of sectarian ideas and practices. In addition, the low integration of ICT, yet most youth, who are targets of radical recruiters, are on the online spaces, operates to be exposed to other extremist agendas and their propaganda and the revelation of the new scramble for Islamic legitimacy in Uganda using financing as a tool of influence and control, gradually increasing sectarian conflicts with Saudis persistently spreading Wahhabism/Salafi-ism Sect- described as a conservative branch of Sunni Islam, the Iranians pushing for the Shia influence especially in Eastern Uganda and Turks exporting the Sectarian disagreements between the Turkish leadership and the Hizmet Movement led by Fetullah Gulen hence planting seeds of proxy hatred and intolerant ideological fights that torn local communities apart. Finally, the lack of youth and women engagement in Mosque programming, and general community engagement, creates opportunities to be exploited by the extremists and their recruiters.

From the results above, it is recommended that various measures be put in place to realize safer and stronger Mosques, with resilience to counter the negative, extremist ideologies of the recruiters and terrorists. Some of the measures include governance strengthening, through institutional capacity building of Imams and committee leaders, developing strategic plans, constitutions, and dispute resolution mechanisms. Further, there is need for wider appreciation, and use of ICT tools, especially social media, as a means to get to the congregation. Also, there is need to have a database of Ummah (Muslim congregates) in every mosque, so as to enable identification of areas for intervention, to deny the recruiters opportunistic areas. Finally, there is need to fully engage the youth and women in programming, so as to negate the propaganda of the recruiters, and build their abilities to be skilled, earn income, and understand the message of the religion better.
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- The UMYDF project team for the clear documentation of the project concepts and proposed processes.
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- UMYDF Field Office Staff for all the support given to the assessment team as and whenever requested.
- Members and leaders of Mosque leadership who were respondents in the survey for their patience.
- The Board Members of UMYDF for providing guidance and support to realize this report.

N.B: UMYDF Withholds the identity of Mosques, locations and attribution of individual respondents due to its confidentiality policy agreed upon with the assessed Mosques and Individuals.
INTRODUCTION

Justification for the Study

The extensive use of mosques and Imams by terrorist organizations and sectarian groups for military, terrorist and political purposes is not new. This study also examines similar uses made by Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)’s Jamil Mukulu in Kampala, Mbaale, Wakiso, Mayuge, Mbarara, Arua, Gulu and Fort Portal districts, Al Shabab in Nairobi, Mombasa and Mogadishu, and global extremists and other radical terror groups in various countries around the Arab world (in conflict focal points such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Pakistan) and even in the Muslim communities in Europe. In many locations both in the Middle East and beyond, radical terrorist organizations and sectarian groups exploit the mosques to hide weapons, organize in preparation for attacks, enlist supporters and terrorist operatives, preach terrorism and indoctrinate Muslims who come to worship with sectarian hatred of others in general.

About Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum (UMYDF)

Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum (UMYDF) is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan youth-led and faith based development organization based in Uganda, which exists to provide a link for connecting all Muslim youth across clusters and development policy processes in Uganda so as to promote their active, responsible and continuing participation in local and global development. Since its founding in 2011, UMYDF has been at the forefront of delivering programs geared towards providing positive alternatives to Muslim youth and imams who are most at risk of being recruited by violent extremists.

About the Assessment on Vulnerability of Mosques and Imams

Concerns and tensions over homegrown radicals have grown with reports of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Al Shabaab militants and Sectarian conflicts between Sunni Vs Shite sects arising within the Muslim Ummah in Uganda, as well as in the East African region. The general purpose of this vulnerability assessment was to determine the strengths, weaknesses, priorities and needs of Mosque and Imams, and based on the results; make recommendations for strengthening mosques to realize stronger and safer Mosques, with resilience to counter the negative, extremist or sectarian ideologies of the terrorists and ill politicians in Uganda.

Study Methodology

Research Design (Summary)

The research and data collection for the purpose of conducting the vulnerability of mosques and Imams in Uganda was both qualitative and quantitative. The method of the study was both descriptive and explanatory using five pre-determined Mosque assessment Indicators including Ideological inclination, Mosque Governance (Database, Decision Making Processes, Transparency and Accountability, Registration of Mosque, Conflict of Resolution Mechanism, and a Constitution), Mosque Financing, Use of New Technology, Outreach Channel and Inclusion of Youth & Women, Level of Knowledge in Mosque (Education of Imams and Madrasa Tutors, Presence of Madrasas (Formal and Informal), and Curriculum). The analysis of data was both statistical and holistic, in rhyme with the quantitative data and qualitative data consecutively. The entire process of research, and reporting, was as per the attached assessment plan.
Scope & Limitations of the study

The study was limited in geographical area, time scope and content. The geographical area of study was limited to the main urban centres and regional cities of Uganda, namely, Kampala, Mbane, Wakiso, Mayuge, Mbarara, Arua, Gulu and Fort Portal. The research was not limited by time, but special reference was given to the relevance of the certain technologies, and their relevance in fanning vulnerability of mosques and Imams. The vulnerability of mosques and Imams assessment was done within January, 2016- to Feb, 2016. The content scope of the study was limited to the incidence of vulnerability of mosques and Imams, and its causative factors.

Target Population

The study was conducted in all the regional cities of Uganda, namely, Gulu (northern region), Mbane, Mayuge (eastern region), Kampala, Wakiso (central region), Mbarara, (western region) Arua (West Nile) and Fort Portal (south western region). The Target population included; Imams, Mosque committee leaders, Madrasa tutors, Youth and Women Leaders, district kadhis among others.

The respondents’ categories were aggregated as below:

Table 1: Respondent Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leaders</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Leaders</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imams /Madrasa tutors</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Kadhis</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The study used a multi-stage sampling process involving different sampling techniques for different respondent groups and different individual units within the respondent group. In selecting the respondent groups, purposive sampling was used by identifying their titles and hence where the researcher could meet them for administration of data collection instruments. Expert purposive sampling was also used at this stage to identify the key informants for purposes of administering the key informant interviews these include the District kadhis, Imams, mosque committee leaders, Madrasa tutors, and Youth and Women leaders.

Types of Data

The type of data collected for analyses and which was the basis of this study was obtained from both secondary and primary sources. The primary data was collected from the above stated area of study through questionnaires. Secondary data was obtained from reviews of writings on the same topic from various sources including online desk-top research, textbooks, journals, newsletters and newspapers.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used the following instruments and modes of administration in data collection;

- Structured Administered Questionnaires (SAQ): The researcher will use structured questionnaires which was thematically based on the research questions and objectives.
- Review of Documents: This method was used to collect primary data retrieved from government records and publications, as well as secondary data from project reports and activities.

Administration of Instruments

The questionnaires were administered to individual Mosque leaders’ respondents by researcher and research assistants. The program targeted four mosques per region, totaling at least 18 mosques in four regions, and six mosques in central region. The research assistants were briefed on the need to explain both the purpose of the research, as well as the purpose of the interview, so as to avoid bias, or convoluted responses. Since UMYDF members are already working in the various communities, they are already known, and consequently, ensured trust and cooperation from the respondents, while eliminating the administrative bureaucracy.

The researcher and assistants were at the same time recording field notes. To avoid disrupting respondents’ schedules, research assistants were advised to seek appointments well in advance for the interviews. Further, data was also being administered through an online survey, using survey monkey. The procedure will involve research assistants registering online, creating the survey using the attached questionnaire, and emailing to their contacts for response.

Data Quality Control (Validity & Reliability)

Instruments were first pre-tested to see if they capture the required information with respect to the research questions through self administration amongst members of the UMYDF, and members of Mosques. This testing helped the researcher to identify and remove sensitive and convoluted questions as well as ensure instrument and data validity. Further validity of instruments was also ensured in this study through triangulation of methods between questionnaires and key informant guides as well as documents review.

Reliability was observed by using similar themes throughout the instruments to permit consistent comparisons. Furthermore, data was made reliable and valid through editing to ensure accuracy and consistency in answers given by respondents. It emphasized the uniformity of answers given and gauged whether the questions were carefully interpreted. Through editing, the researcher was also able to ensure that all questions are answered.
Data Analysis Procedure

Data from questionnaires was entered into the computer using basic word document sheet for analysis. The key informant interviews, observational notes and document examination was reduced into categories or themes and analyzed thematically, and holistically.

Key Findings, Discussions and Recommendations

The study found that all mosques interviewed lack the following key factors in controlling their vulnerability as highlighted below:

Basic Mosque Data

The study focused on 18 mosques, with the representation in various regions of Uganda, as below, so as to give a holistic view of the situation of vulnerability of mosques across the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Region</th>
<th>Number of Mosques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ideological Inclination

The study finds that all the Mosques had Islamic ideological inclinations. The study found that out of the 18 mosques interviewed, 9 were of Sunni ideological leaning, while 6 were Salafi, and the other 3 were Shia.

Salafis believe in a return to the original ways of Islam. The word "Salafi" comes from the Arabic phrase, 'as-salaf as-saliheen', which refers to the first three generations of Muslims (starting with the Companions of the Prophet), otherwise known as the Pious Predecessors.

Sunni Islam is sometimes referred to as "orthodox Islam". The word "Sunni" comes from the term Sunnah which refers to the sayings and actions of the Islamic prophet Muhammad as recorded in the hadith. Sunnis believe that the companions of Muhammad were the best of Muslims. This belief is based upon prophetic traditions such as one narrated by Abdullah, son of Masud, in which Muhammad said: "The best of the people are my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them." Support for this view is also found in the Quran, according to Sunnis. Sunnis also believe that the companions were true believers since it was the companions who were given the task of compiling the Quran.
Shia - an abbreviation of Shia-ne-Ali, Shi’atu ‘Ali “followers of Ali”), is a branch of Islam which holds that the Islamic prophet Muhammad’s proper successor as Caliph was his son-in-law and cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib. Shia Islam primarily contrasts with Sunni Islam, whose adherents believe that Muhammad’s father-in-law Abu Bakr was his proper successor. Shia considers Ali to have been divinely appointed as the successor to Muhammad, and as the first Imam. The Shia also extend this “Imami” doctrine to Muhammad’s family, the Ahl al-Bayt (“the People of the House”), and some individuals among his descendants, known as Imams, who they believe possess special spiritual and political authority over the community.

The study upholds that the growing Salafi movement in Uganda if not checked may result in the radicalization of mosques due to the inspiration of charismatic leaders, and thus enticing young people who feel rejected within mainstream societies. Of course, this is not to say that all Muslims that identify with these schools of thought are violent fanatics or share the same beliefs. A minority is taking the fanatical route and violently acts upon the teachings within these schools of thought. Such a teaching is the idea that Muslims who follow the Shia ideology are regarded as non-Muslims. This makes it permissible to demonize the Shia mosques- a dangerous course to human security and freedom of religion if not checked.

Mosque Governance (Database, Decision Making Processes, Transparency and Accountability, Registration of Mosque, Conflict of Resolution Mechanism, and a Constitution)

Further, on the issue of governance, none of the mosques is registered, and none of the Mosques has a constitution. Further, none of the mosques has a dispute resolution mechanism, a database of congregates, includes women and youth in its programming, and is registered. This coupled with other factors lead to cracks in the mosque, and ultimately, can lead to vulnerability to extremist or sectarian ideas and practices trying to hijack Islam and present it to the world as a religion of extremism, hatred, and terrorism. Research elsewhere has indicated that extremists have exploited poor governance in some mosques to recruit young Muslims who might be angered by what they see as a war against Islam in Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Afghanistan.

It is recommended that future research focus on the management committees, to see if they are usually men-only (or at least male-dominated), or if they are liberal to encourage new ideas, and neo classical reasoning. Further, it is recommended that Mosques should register with Muslim Councils board, develop their own constitutions, dispute resolution mechanisms and database systems in a bid to create safer Mosques.

Mosque Financing

The study established that Saudi Arabia is not the only source of resources for Mosque financing in Uganda—public and private entities in Kuwait, Qatar, Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and more recently Turkey. With 13 of the 18 Mosques interviewed relying on donor financing; only 5 Mosques were relied on self-financing as a source of resources linked to collection and transfer of funds supporting Islamic affairs. The new scramble for Islamic legitimacy in Uganda using financing as a tool of influence and control has increased sectarian conflicts between the Saudis and the Iranians. With the Saudis persistently spreading the Wahhabism/Salaafism Sect- described as a conservative branch of Sunni Islam, the Iranians are also pushing for the Shia influence especially in Eastern Uganda and Turks exporting the Sectarian disagreements between the Turkish leadership and the Hizmet Movement led by Fetullah Gulen.

This study hence finds that there is need for monitoring, and reporting on the sources of funds, more closely. It is recommended, that, at a national level, an oversight committee is created to establish the sources and uses of funds in Mosques, to avoid terrorist and sectarian groups taking advantage of poor Imams, or communities.
Use of New Technology

The study finds that the mosques are using limited ICT tools, with all of the 18 mosques interviewed only using WhatsApp, as mode of communication to congregants, or Ummah. It is interesting that there is complete lack of use of other social media tools, namely, Facebook, websites, YouTube, etc. The results indicated that the main social media tool being used was WhatsApp, used to source information from posts, and also to post information especially preaching and sharing messages on true teachings of Islam.

It is recommended that Mosque, and Imams start using technology since the world is connected in ways that we could never have imagined before. 15-20 years ago, and has become an integral part of young peoples’ lives who find technology as a useful tool for Islamic spiritual learning and refection. Imams and Mosques can also potentially share true Islamic messages with billions of people around the globe through the use of social media platform and electronic devices. In terms of true Dawah, a five minute video on the activities of a mosque, featuring a friendly-faced scholar giving a virtual tour of the place could work wonders.

Outreach Channel and Inclusion of Youth & Women

The study also finds that the outreach channel existent in 13 of the 18 Mosques is faith only, with only three mosques having youth and women focused outreach engagements. This is a challenge, since Mosques exist in a social cultural setting, and hence, the ability of the message of the Quran to be spread both through faith activities, as well as through community relations, is key. The inability to reach out to the communities leads to automatic carving out of certain segments of the Muslim community, who may then, as consequence, fall prey to the extremists, or radical propaganda of the recruiters.

It is recommended that the Mosques adopt the Muslim Community Leader’s Guide to Development, which is clearly written book with basic information on how to transform mosques into holistic centres of development with programs that attract and address the needs of the youth and Women be adopted as a guiding principle for Masjids in Uganda with a central purpose of practicing and sharing the values of Islam by providing religious, educational and recreational facilities for members of the public. In essence the proposed development of ‘model mosques’ as a central hub for the community, offering educational and recreation facilities that embrace non-Muslims.

Level of Knowledge in Mosque (Education of Imams and Madrasa Tutors, Presence of Madrasas (Formal and Informal), and Curriculum)

The research study also sought to analyze education in the Mosques, by analyzing the education levels of Imams and Madrasa tutors, the presence of madrassas for basic Islamic education, and the presence of curriculum for Madrasa tutors. The study found that the levels of education of the Imams, as well as Madrasa tutors in all the Mosques studied, is low, at highest level being O-Level, secondary school theology qualification, and even this, with only 3 tutors having A-Level theology qualification, and only 3 Imams having A-Level of theology education. The results above indicate a gap in Islamic theological knowledge offered to congregants, and hence, possibility of extremist ideologies to permeate the Mosque, since the level of knowledge of the Imams and Tutors are very low.

This is an opportunity that can be mined by the extremists to populate the shallow teachings of the ill trained tutors and Imams. Further, whereas all mosques were found to have Madrasas, the study found that none of them had a written curriculum. This is extremely dangerous, since, the extremists can implant their own tutors, and content. The research did not analyze whether the tutors, and Imams, undergo special training, to qualify as Tutors. But if this is the case, then maybe there is need for a change in the same. It is also recommended that there is an analysis of the quality of the teaching of Mosques, to see whether, and to what extent, the Madrasas (mostly informal or supplementary schools attached to the majority of Secular schools offer an Islamic education, to thousands of young Muslim children, that is characterized by rote learning and goes against mainstream educational practices of critical thinking and discussion.
Recommendations

1. Develop a New Vision of a Prophetic Mosque
The number one priority for mosques in Uganda is to develop and propagate a new paradigm for mosques that breaks away from the old-world understanding of a mosque as simply a place of prayer. Mosque leaders indicated numerous times that too many mosque attendees come to pray and then leave, having little sense of mission, community, or financial responsibility. The mosque should be a nexus for the Muslim community where all aspects of the Muslims’ life is touched—spirituality, education, social relations, cultural expression and pursuit of justice in the world. A new vision of the Prophetic Mosque is needed, looking back to the dynamic and mission-oriented community of Muhammad (saws) and looking forward to the task of establishing Islam in Uganda.

2. Inspire Commitment and Involvement of Mosque Attendees
The highest ranking priority of mosque leaders is “increasing the spirit of commitment of attendees,” and the number one challenge that mosque leaders identified is the lack of involvement and the lack of volunteers of mosque participants. A sense of commitment to a particular mosque needs to be engendered in mosque participants, while maintaining the understanding the Muslims members of the Ummah through having a database so as to enable identification of areas for intervention, to deny the recruiters opportunistic areas. Mosque participants need to be inspired with a vision of the Prophetic Mosque, and thereby give more of their time, energy and money to the mosque.

3. Improve Finances of Mosque
Mosque attendees do not give to the mosque on the same level as Christians, and as a result mosques have not hired Imams and professional staff to run the mosque and direct programs. Mosques must increase the giving rate of mosque participants and also find new avenues of raising money.

4. Initiate Youth Programming
Of all the possible activities and programs of a mosque, the top priority is youth programming. In the open-ended question on mosque priorities, mosque leaders placed youth activities and involvement as their number one priority. The challenge is how best to attract youth to the mosque, and how best to inspire and educate them in the ideals of Islam so as to negate the propaganda of the recruiters, and build their abilities to be skilled, earn income, and understand the message of the religion better.

5. Involve Women
Women are largely marginalized in mosques and as a result a vital human resource is lost. Women are the mothers of the Muslim community, and ideally the mosque should be in partnership with mothers in affecting the youth. In general Muslim women have more free time than men, and the mosque needs to benefit from this important human resource.

6. Improve Governance
Mosques operate under different models of governance, and a consensus needs to develop as to which model is best suited for Ugandan mosques. Most mosque leaders have little expertise and knowledge in running a mosque and as a result there is a great need to provide training and guidance to mosque leaders including governance strengthening, through institutional capacity building, setting strategic plans, and having constitutions, registrations, database systems and dispute resolution mechanisms.

7. Balanced Understanding of Islam
The second greatest challenge that mosque leaders identified is the differences in opinion among the diverse groups within the Muslim community. Mosque leaders made mention in particular of mosque participants who bring ideas of Islam that are based on cultural notions that are out of context in Uganda. Mosques need to be strong advocates of an authentic, balanced understanding of Islam.

8. Outreach
An essential function of any mosque is to facilitate Muslims becoming involved in Ugandan society—through various avenues of involvement such as educating Ugandan about Islam, interfaith, dawah, community service and advocacy for justice.