

Christian-Muslim Children and Youth Empowerment: Interfaith De-radicalisation Engagements to Minimise Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa

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Abstract

The paper examines the roles that Christian and Muslim religious organisations can play to set up the 'Christian-Muslim Children and Youth Empowerment Programme' aimed at de-radicalisation engagements to minimise terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. To have clear grasp of the underpinnings of the research concern, the Literary Interpretation Methodology, which provides a framework to examine textual themes, explore cultural meanings, and examine social relationships was relied on to interact with archived contemporary reports, biblical texts, and Qur'anic sources that shed light on the science of faith-based organizations, the rationale of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, and the possibility of Christian-Muslim de-radicalisation engagements. Study findings indicate that in Sub-Saharan Africa, armed conflicts, although ignited by political disgruntlements, are often instigated by Christian and Islamic ideologies. Overseas funders influence faith-based organisations to establish robust environments for converts within communities where charity-driven services are offered. In pursuit of their goals, they work hard to convert non-adherents to their religion. On the ground, foreign influence is reflected in the design of the educational curriculum, the enforcement of foreign moral values, and the exclusion of non-adherents to a given religious faith from services. As a result, there is widespread economic poverty in Africa. Financial poverty is one of the push factors that has been found to incite radical movements and violent extremism. Young people are influenced by religious teachings that promise them Heavenly Paradise privileges, to escape from poverty, corruption, scarce marital partners, and illiteracy, which have thwarted their life career opportunities to join terrorist groups. Terrorist actions have led to loss of life, displacement of communities, closure of schools, and overall insecurity in Africa. To minimise terrorist acts, it is recommended that interreligious leaders establish locally sustainable Christian-Muslim de-radicalisation programmes to empower young people with interfaith engagement skills.

Keywords: Christian-Muslim, Children, Youth, Terrorism, De-radicalisation

1.0 Introduction

Charitable support to alleviate economic poverty is a virtue upheld by the Abrahamic religions and African social traditions of collective responsibility. Driven by sacred cultural mandates, faith-based organisations have supported millions worldwide in overcoming traumatic life challenges. Since their inception, non-governmental organisations have focused on humanitarian assistance to rescue poverty-stricken communities from hunger, human rights abuses, and disease epidemics. In the long run, charity organisations shift their attention to curbing child poverty. Young people are believed to be the future generation that needs nurturing to avoid the hazardous, life-robbing past.

Accordingly, Faith-based organisations regulated by the State are the core nurturers of young people (Jahani & Parayandeh, 2024, pp. 12-14).

However, even when substantial resources have been invested for decades to empower young people with life-sustaining skills, child poverty has persisted as a global challenge. Worldwide, 412 million young people experience economic poverty, of whom 76 % are in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF-UK, 2025, p. 1).

Despite the fact that multiple factors influence child poverty, rising levels of conflict in Africa have displaced millions, disrupted education, and exposed young people to terrorism and violent extremism. In Southern and Eastern Africa, the number of young people projected to be subjected to civil wars, ethnic hostilities, and interfaith conflicts is estimated to increase from 71 million in the year 2000 to 97.8 million by the year 2050, and in Central and West Africa, from 5.1 million to 69 million (Russell, 2024, p.38).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, armed conflicts, although ignited by political disgruntlements, are often instigated by Christian and Islamic ideologies. The interfaith conflicts, some funded by overseas bodies, have indoctrinated the masses with religious extremist mentalities and affected young people's access to quality social services intended to improve their health, education, and economic well-being. In addition, interfaith conflicts have uprooted millions from their lawful homes. Many have been subjected to mistreatments and horrible crimes against humanity (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2019, p.8). It is against this background that the study examines the roles that Christian and Muslim religious organisations can play to set up the 'Christian-Muslim Children and Youth Empowerment Programme' aimed at de-radicalisation engagements to minimise terrorism and violent extremism in Africa.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualised that the programme output activities of Christian and Muslim organisations in sub-Saharan Africa are characterised by the impartation of foreign religious ideologies that have paralysed the cultural norms of indigenous people; as such, Africans are held in a web of African-Christian and African-Muslim religious identity crisis. Next, there exist socioeconomic grievances rooted in historical interfaith animosities and misinterpretations of foreign sacred texts. As such, faith groups that are well-positioned financially use coercive

conversion means to undermine the aspirations of the different religious others. To express their disgruntlement, the undermined religious groups resort to terrorism and violent extremism.

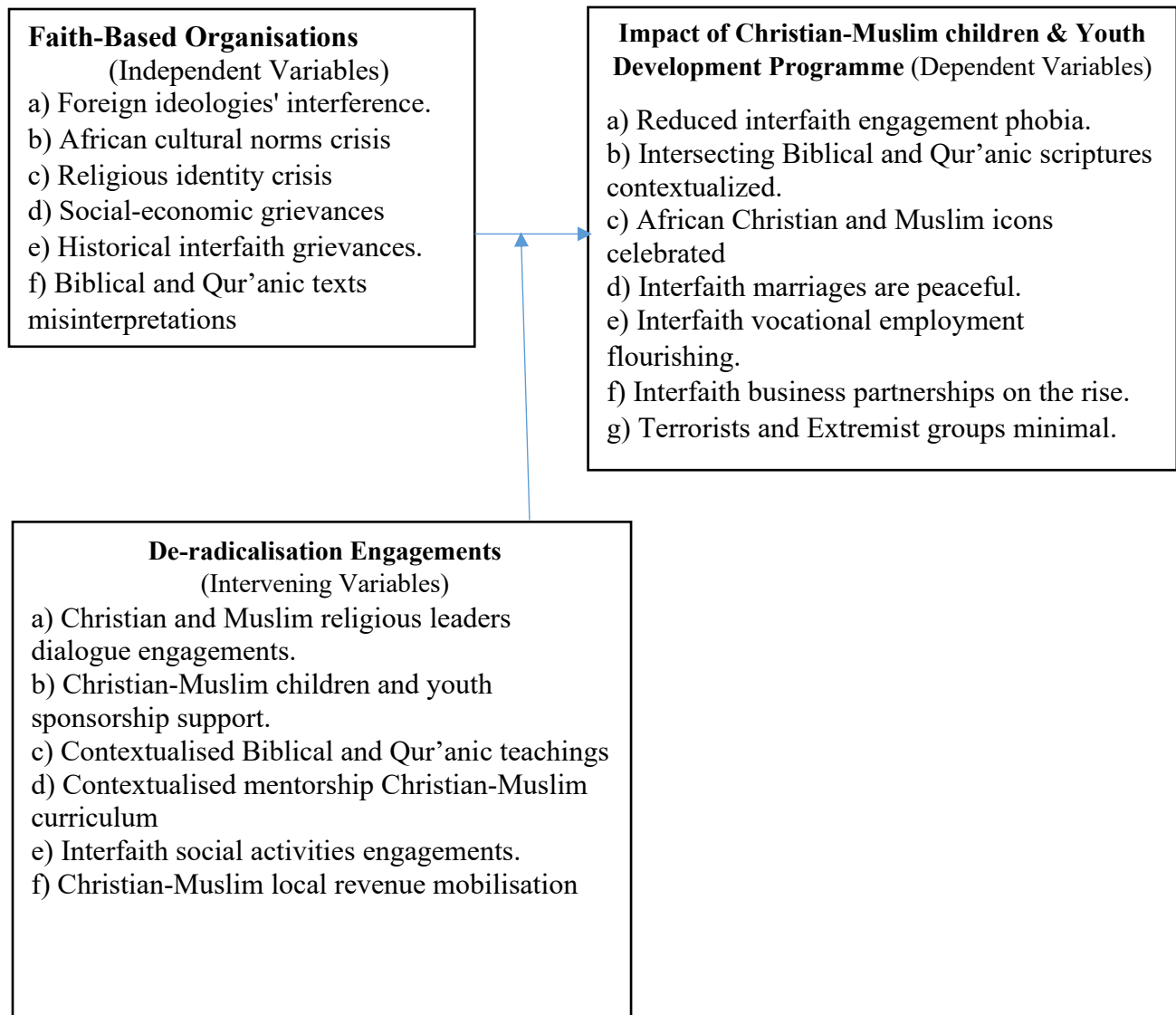


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

To minimise interfaith terrorism and violent extremism in sub-Saharan Africa, it is postulated that if African Christian and Muslim religious leaders come on a dialogue table and think deeply about the communal responsive mandates of their Black Culture and examine the effects of interfaith conflicts, then they can craft a better interfaith future to save the next generations from bloodshed and economic poverty.

To plant sustainable seeds that ensure African communal responsiveness is mirrored in society, a Christian-Muslim sponsorship programme needs to be established to empower vulnerable children to develop professional intellectuality and interfaith moral engagement skills. In most instances, it is the less educated people who are indoctrinated by religious fanatics to engage in terrorism. Within the framework of Christian-Muslim children and youth engagement programmes, intersecting Biblical and Qur'anic teachings contextualised through African-language concepts can be taught; a staged Christian-Muslim moral development mentorship curriculum can be implemented; interfaith social activities can be encouraged; and a Christian-Muslim local revenue mobilisation culture can be initiated and, through a government policy framework, sustained.

The resultant outcome of the Christian-Muslim children and youth development programme would be reduced interfaith engagement phobia, respectful engagements with intersecting Biblical and Qur'anic scriptures, peaceful interfaith marriages, interfaith vocational employment spaces free of coercive religious conversions, the emergence of interfaith business partnerships, and minimal incidences of terrorists and extremist groups in Africa.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study was library-based. This was due to the broad scope of the research topic, which made a primary data collection approach impossible. To gain a clear understanding of the underpinnings of the research concern, the Literary Interpretation Methodology, which provides a framework for examining textual themes, exploring cultural meanings, and examining social relationships, was utilised (Mauer & Venecek, 2021). The approach was relied on to interact with archived contemporary reports, Biblical texts, and Qur'anic sources that shed light on the science of faith-based organisations, rationale of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, Christian and Muslim relationship building initiatives in Africa, and possibility of Christian-Muslim de-radicalisation engagements.

4.0 Faith-Based Organisations in Africa

Since colonial days, sub-Saharan Africa has been documented by international bodies as the worst hit by all sorts of informalities associated with economic poverty. Every year, financial aid and human expertise are provided by overseas nations to support impoverished Africans in scaling up economic growth. External funding is channelled through government agencies and non-

governmental organisations. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) comprise community-based, civil society, and faith-based organisations (UNICEF-UK, 2025, pp. 1-2).

Even though secular organisations focus on building patriotic skills in young people, Faith-Based Organisations focus on inculcating religious values. In sub-Saharan Africa, 82% of the population trusts the leaders of Faith-Based Organisations in service delivery more than those of secular institutions. The leadership of secular NGOs is perceived as corrupt (Green, 2020, p.22).

Faith-Based Organisations, while each has a unique missionary mandate, are inspired by their religious ideologies to improve the quality of life in their target communities. However, studies have found that overseas funders influence Faith-Based Organisations in sub-Saharan Africa to establish robust environments of converts within communities where charity-driven services are offered. In pursuit of their goals, they work hard to convert non-adherents to their religion. Identification with their religious creeds is a yardstick for determining whether one benefits from organisational resources (Green, 2020, pp. 9-15; Jahani & Parayandeh, 2024, pp. 12-13).

On the ground, foreign influence is reflected in the design of the education curriculum, the procedures for generating income, restrictive expenditure lines, the enforcement of foreign moral values, and the exclusion of non-adherents to a given religious faith from services (Green, 2020, pp. 9-15).

Despite the shortcomings of Faith-Based Organizations, studies show that religiously driven institutions have done commendable work in upholding human rights, promoting public health, and combating economic poverty. Leaders of Faith-Based Organisations are far more effective at soliciting donations than leaders of secular organisations (Green, 2020, pp. 18-19). As such, Faith-Based Organisations continue to grow in Africa every year. For instance, the data in Table 1 illustrate the organic growth of NGOs and Islamic-Based Organisations on the continent.

Table 1: Islamic NGOs in Africa 1980-2000

Country	1980		2000	
	No. of NGOs	No. of Islamic NGOs	No. of NGOs	No. of Islamic NGOs
Benin	23	3	144	31
Burkina Faso	56	9	171	29
Cameroon	42	9	89	17
Central African Republic	12	0	57	9
Chad	29	5	68	23
Ethiopia	23	0	150	13
Gambia	17	2	81	17
Kenya	57	8	268	23
Mozambique	14	2	154	19
Mali	33	5	74	21
Niger	13	3	69	29
Nigeria	1,350	54	4,028	523
Senegal	50	19	112	35
Sierra Leone	65	3	80	9
Sudan	19	5	71	29
Tanzania	17	3	147	27
Uganda	34	8	133	37
Total	1854	138	5896	891

Source: Salih (2002, pp.9-10).

Although current data on the expansion of Islamic NGOs in Africa are unavailable in public display archives, Table 1 clearly shows that Islamic organisations are operational in most African countries. They provide humanitarian services aimed at equipping young people with Islamic revolutionary ideologies. Along those lines, Islamic NGOs seek to support Muslim communities in attaining quality education, acquiring preventive and curative health skills, and achieving economic self-sufficiency (Salih, 2002, p. 11).

In essence, several sectarian Islamic NGOs that differ on religious doctrinal aspirations are in operation in Africa. While in operation, some Islamic NGOs take on extremist religious approaches. Islamic NGOs driven by religious extremism are called upon to align their programme activities in accordance with religious ideologies, as outlined as follows:

- 1) Islam is a total and comprehensive way of life. Religion is integral to politics, law, and society.
- 2) The failure of Muslim societies is due to their departure from the straight path of Islam and their following a Western secular path, with its secular, materialistic ideologies and values.
- 3) The renewal of society requires a return to Islam, an Islamic religio-political and social reformation or revolution that draws its inspiration from the Quran and from the first great Islamic movement led by Prophet Muhammad.
- 4) To restore God's rule and inaugurate a true Islamic social order, civil codes modelled on Western principles must be replaced by Islamic law, which is the only acceptable blueprint for Muslim society.
- 5) Although the Westernisation of society is condemned, modernisation as such is not. Science and technology are accepted, but they are subordinated to Islamic belief and values in order to guard against the westernisation and secularisation of Muslim society.
- 6) The process of Islamisation, or more accurately, re-Islamisation, requires organisations or associations of dedicated and trained Muslims, who by their example and activities are willing to struggle (jihad) against corruption and social injustice (Salih, 2002, pp.8-9).

Based on the Islamic ideologies outlined above, some Muslim scholars, such as Esposito (1998, p. 165), whose religious-extremist arguments are put forward by Salih (2002, pp. 8-9), seem to argue that approaches to social engagement rooted in the Arabian cultural universe are replicable worldwide. That is impractical. As time passes, what worked in the past in a given cultural context may no longer solve the life emergencies that keep changing. Every human generation and the

diverse earthly cultures have different assignments that need unique approaches. Promoting a cultural or religious identity that considers itself superior to others is defamatory. No earthly culture is without shortcomings, but all cultures are interconnected, feeding on each other's uniqueness.

Besides what can be termed as radical Islamic approaches to community engagement that ignite interfaith conflicts, Islamic NGOs receive funding from the Arab World. Ninety percent of the Arab World's contributions come from the three Gulf countries - Saudi Arabia, which contributes 85%, the United Arab Emirates, which contributes 10%, and Kuwait, with a contribution of 5% (Rous, 2011, pp.1-3; Rous, 2012, pp.2-3).

Arab countries raise funds through Zakat to support humanitarian initiatives and poverty alleviation. While zakat is compulsory in some Islamic countries, in others, non-state actors are licensed to encourage and remind Muslims of their obligation to give a portion of their incomes to support the needs of the poor (Rous, 2012, p. 1; Weiss, 2020, pp. 5-10).

In the Arab World, of the annual Overseas Development Assistance, 86% is disbursed overseas as grants, and 14% is used to service occasional loans to improve the living standards of the poor. Of the annual collections, 61% of the aid comes from government zakat revenues deducted from civil servants, 21% from Development Organisations, and 18% from Charity and Foundation agencies. Combined, the Arab world's annual collections are disbursed to Asia (70%), Africa (14%), and 16% goes to Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the West Bank and Gaza, and Sudan, thus, communities bracketed as 'highly indebted countries' (Rous, 2011, pp.1-3; Rous, 2012, pp.2-3).

In addition to the Arab World, several agencies in Islamic and non-Islamic states are involved in Zakat collection, Zakat enterprise development, and overseas support (Rous, 2012, pp. 2-3; Weiss, 2020, pp. 5-10).

Alongside Islamic NGOs operating in Africa, several Christian NGOs are active across the continent. On the international scene, five development organisations are singled out as the most prominent supporters of Christian NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa: Food for the Poor, Feed the Children, Compassion International, Scripture Union, and World Vision (Anudu, 2017; Green, 2020, pp. 7-9; 19).

Although the exact foreign aid extended to Christian NGOs in Africa is not verifiable, the missionary mandates of Scripture Union and World Vision, which are focused on nurturing young people, are briefly analysed, thus:

Scripture Union: It began operations in Africa in 1885. Since that time, the organisation has experienced numerical growth, and the programme operations are in 38 African countries (Anudu, 2017; Scripture Union International, 2022).

Scripture Union movement works with churches, Christian organisations, and academic institutions to offer spiritual nurture to young people, empowering them to become fulfilled and responsible Christians in their social spheres of influence (Kuschmierz & Hellwig, 2020, p. 2). Funding for Scripture Union programmes comes from several sources, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Revenue Sources for the year 2022/2023

Revenue Source	Donations	Legacies	Interest received	Dividend received	Government grants
Amount £'000	2,089	1,154	47	17	2

Source: Godden, 2023, p. 26

As shown in Table 2, funding for Scripture Union activities worldwide comes from donations, legacies, accumulated interest on fixed deposits, and government grants from the country where the international office is located. Within the International Office, a professional team is responsible for fundraising (Godden, 2023, p. 7). As such, the revenues collected in the year 2022/2023 were disbursed as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Regional Distribution of Revenues

Region	Activities undertaken directly	Grant fund £'000	Support costs £'000	2023 total £'000
Worldwide	-	79	16	95
Africa	1	52	10	63
Americas	-	25	5	30
Former Soviet Republics	-	17	3	20
Europe	1	12	3	16
Pacific	-	8	2	10
Asia	-	4	1	5
Rest of Britain & Northern Ireland	-	3	1	4

Source: Godden, 2023, p.28

From Tables 2 and 3, it is not clear whether there is an income line from African sources to support Scripture Union activities. The invisibility of local revenue in fillers may indicate that local resources in Africa are negligible or absent. This then means that Africans are programmed to be recipients of foreign aid. Why the continual inflow of foreign support since 1885, when, in the actual sense, the alumni would have been empowered to give back to the organisations that nurtured them, and African employees skilled in harnessing indigenous resources to grow and sustain the movement's financial base?

Besides, Scripture Union, in its programme inputs, focuses on directing resources to people who adhere to Christianity. However, in African society, there are people of different faith backgrounds who, when denied subsidiary growth opportunities besides Christian nurture, miss a lot on economic life nurture opportunities. It is such exclusivist approaches that yield disgruntled interfaith neighbours in Africa.

World Vision: World Vision's initial entry into Africa occurred in the 1980s, when Ethiopia was devastated by a severe humanitarian crisis. At that moment, the country was famine-stricken, many people had died, and millions were starving due to food shortages. Since then, the organisation has

scaled up its operations, and the movement is now operational in 27 African countries and other regions worldwide (World Vision International, 2025).

In practice, World Vision is driven by Christian ethical mandates to nurture vulnerable children so that they can acquire professional skills to minimise disease, economic poverty, and illiteracy in their households, and to display Christian spiritual values in adulthood (World Vision International – Report, 2025, pp. 6-7).

To raise funds to address humanitarian needs, World Vision works in partnership with the European Union, Joining Forces, UNICEF, the World Bank, the World Health Organisation, and the World Food Programme (World Vision International – Partners, 2025). The annual revenue summary, captured since 2019, is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: World Vision Annual Revenues

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Revenue in US\$ Billion	\$2.90	\$3.01	\$3.15	\$3.25	\$3.46	\$3.31

Source: World Vision International - Report (2025, p.20)

Table 4 clearly shows that World Vision has sustainable revenue sources. The expenditure lines for 2024 are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: 2024 Expenditure by Category

Category	Amount	Percent
Development programmes	\$1,670 million	50
Relief and rehabilitation programmes	\$1,142 million	34
Community education and advocacy	\$20 million	1
Fundraising	\$345 million	10
Administration	\$163 million	5

Source: World Vision International - Report (2025, p.20)

Table 4 visibly illustrates that community development programmes and relief and rehabilitation programmes are the focal areas that consume the revenues generated by World Vision. The donation revenue generated in 2024 was distributed as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6: Programme Expenditure by Region

Region	Expenditure
Africa	\$1.47 billion
Asia Pacific	\$425 million
Middle East & Eastern Europe	\$345 million
Latin America & the Caribbean	\$274 million
North America	\$241 million
Australia & New Zealand	\$15 million
Other International Programming	\$68 million

Source: World Vision International – Report (2025, p.21)

Looking at the expenditure displays in Table 6, it is evident that the African continent accounted for a lion’s share of the resources collected by World Vision.

Although external support is important in helping the poor in sub-Saharan Africa attain meaning in life, its mobilisation philosophy is shaped by Arabian and European philosophies. In the Arabian and European worlds, giving to the poor is mandated by law and is a religious obligation for every citizen (Rous, 2012, pp. 2-3; Weiss, 2020, pp. 5-10). However, Africans have been tamed to be recipients of foreign dole-outs, disabled to manipulate their cultural communal giving heritages to solve the long-term equation of poverty in their localities.

Even when Christianity and Islam are at play in Africa with the associated alms-giving sacred mandates, scanty information is available to show that Africans have been influenced by foreign religious forces to demand that secular governments enact policies aimed at influencing local religious groups to craft sustainable resource mobilising contextual systems that they can rely on to raise funds locally to build their own economy. While there are Faith-Based Organisations, such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies that are not religiously conversion-focused but inclusive in their programme approaches to humanity (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015, pp.5-16), many Christian and Muslim organisations in Africa are promoting foreign, exclusivist interfaith engagements.

In the physical arena, indigenous Africans are Muslims and Christians for the purpose of attaining public goods, but in their innate ancestry, their divine, ingrained identities vibrate, and these magnetic forces draw them together as a people of Black culture to engage in traditional social transactions. In Africa, there are several tribes with diverse cultural expressions, but few of them are hostile to their tribal neighbours. Even in circumstances where tribal clashes occur, conflicts are resolved using the long-held African oral tradition.

In fact, most of the indigenous African cultures, even when the urbanised communities have abandoned communal responsiveness approaches to conflict resolutions due to modernity, the rural-based communities still rely on an oral curriculum to pass on moral values through myths, folktales, proverbs, songs, dances, vestments, rituals, symbols, taboos, legends, stories, speeches, and ceremonies.

In African cultural settings, no tribal icons coerce other tribes to adopt their cherished cultures, nor do they force individuals to proselytise. Certainly, tribal hostilities, clashes, and discrimination hold less weight in Africa compared to the current Christian-Muslim conflicts.

Africans are aware of the inter-tribal colourful traditions and accord the highest respect to each tribal cultural expression. The greatest challenge is that Christianity and Islamic cultures have no genetic ancestry in Africa. They are not African milk-suckled cultures; for that reason, their collective integration into African cultural expressions, social traditions, and linguistic concepts is limited, even though Christianity and Islamic religious expressions seem to have undergone separatist indigenisation into the African way of life. It is such religious separatist and discriminatory anomalies that are creating space for terrorism and violent extremism to scale up in Africa.

5.0 Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa

Terrorism and violent extremist acts, though traced back to Jewish Zealotic times (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, pp.55-56), the term was coined during the French Revolution (1793 -1794) to describe acts of violence and harsh measures directed by the government against citizens who resisted revolutionary ideologies. The suppressive approach led to the emergence of anarchists, collective anarchists, and anarcho-communist terrorist groups worldwide. To address dissatisfaction

projected by governments, exclusionism, nationalism, and socialism, terrorism and violent extremism became the key terror approaches (United Nations, 2018, pp. 1-4).

As the wings of terrorism spread, the African continent registered high incidences from 2011 starting with the Libyan crisis and then spread to Mozambique, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Mali, Uganda, Gulf of Guinea, Somalia, Sahel, the Chad lake Basin, Guinea gulf, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Tanzania, and every African country is experiencing the lethal effects of religious and political radicalism (Apollos, 2022).

Currently, on the continent of Africa, key terrorist groups include: Al Qaeda Sunni group in the Islamic Maghreb whose primary goal is to establish an Islamic Kingdom in North Africa; Boko Haram, a Sunni group in Northern Nigeria driven by the agenda of establishing a caliphate state; and Al Shabab Sunni group in Somalia focused on retaliating against neighbouring countries for their military interference in Somali political affairs. Other groups include “Janjaweed, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting, Allied Democratic Forces, Armed Islamic Group, and Tripoli Province of the Islamic State” (Albuquerque, 2017, p.23)

On the global scene, the after effects of terrorism, thus high death rates, property destruction, and traumatic stress disorders have been registered highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (PSC Report, 2022). Islamic jihadists, targeting academic institutions, hospitals, industrial plants, community marketplaces, recreation centres, bus and train stations, embassies, and military installations, have killed millions of people, destroyed property, abducted countless numbers of people, and committed all sorts of cruelty against humanity. Terrorist actions have led to loss of life, displacement of communities, states of emergency, closure of schools, and overall insecurity in Africa (Thurston, 2015, pp.114-115; Jenkins, 2022; Wines, 2022).

Besides loss of human life and disruption of community social services, money is being fleeced from poor families by terrorists in the bid to have kidnapped hostages released. Terrorists are engaged in robberies and human body mutilations (Agbiboa, 2013, p.162). They harvest human body parts, such as kidneys, livers, hearts, eye corneas, tissues, brains, etc., from captives and sell them to organ traffickers (Reisen, 2017, pp. 183-186). They go on to remove delicate human body organs from the apostates and have them transplanted into wounded jihadists (Bigio & Vogelstein,

2019, p.8). It has been established that laboratory chemical tests are being performed on the abductees (Baker, 2019).

In the worst scenarios, abductees are subjected to severe forms of sexual slavery, sexual violence, forced marriages, forced pregnancies, and forced conversions. Terrorist leaders claim that abductees are God-given spoils of war that can be manipulated and used just like any other human-owned property. Girls are involved in cooking and carrying weapons. Boys are used as human shields and to identify unmarried women and girls in the community who can be abducted (International Crisis Group, 2016, pp.9-10).

On the other hand, self-martyrs who were unsuccessful in their missions and were either arrested or they abandoned the move; exhibit sub-clinical suicidal tendencies; suffer from depression; their personal lives are unstable; and they are associated with divorce, financial troubles, emotional breakdowns, health complications, social isolation, hopelessness, guilt, and shame (UNODC, 2018; Hutchins, 2017, pp.8-9).

Terrorism is growing faster in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Sunni-Salafist groups are reported to be mobilising people to establish Islamic caliphates. Imams are being trained to repudiate the historically more tolerant Sufi version of Islam practised in Africa, and the radical Shiite Muslims are influencing the economic business environment of Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has become a hub for incubating and hatching terrorist ideologies (Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2010; Worcester, 2015).

6.0 Factors Responsible for Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2022 reveals that political conflict zones account for 97% of the total global deaths from terrorism, with 48% annually registered in Sub-Saharan Africa. This region has emerged as the epicentre of violent extremism (Relief Web, 2022). In Africa, igniters that energise men and women to engage in terrorism and violent extremism are connected to political shortfalls and religious fanaticisms. Some of the notable push factors include:

Scarcity of Life Basic Needs: Economic poverty, perceptions of injustice, human-rights violations, social-political exclusion, widespread corruption, mistreatment of certain groups, manipulations, breakdown of communication between authority figures and youth, alienations,

etc., are the push factors that have been found to incite radical movements and violent extremisms in African countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2016, pp.4-5).

African governments are grappling with massive numbers of graduates and youth unemployment. In 2023, the number of youth who were not in employment, education, or professional training in sub-Saharan Africa was 53 million. On the global scene, the region registered the worst youth unemployment. In addition, dwindling agricultural fortunes, poor social services and infrastructure, and grievances stemming from elite corruption scandals are affecting the economic survival of low-income earners in Africa. Such challenges are influencing people to join terrorist movements that have painted easy escape routes from biting economic poverty. Islamic fundamentalists influenced by the jihadist phrase, ‘Anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors,’ are recruiting many people to join the terrorist organisations (Agbibo, 2013, pp.160-165; ILO, 2024, p.2).

To avoid the path of transgressors, young people are influenced by religious and moral teachings that promise them paradise windows of escape from patriarchy, poverty, corruption, scarce marital partners, and illiteracy that have thwarted their life career opportunities to join terrorist groups. On the other hand, some join the groups voluntarily to advance their freedom and in search of employment opportunities, to engage in lucrative businesses, to meet new marital partners, to follow up on their spouses, while thousands are kidnapped and assimilated into the terrorist system (International Crisis Group, 2016, p.5; Ali, 2018, p.2).

Reactivation of Caliphate Monarchy: Caliphate ideologies upheld by radical Islamic groups active during the medieval period promoted hierarchical governance, a borderless Islamic state, and an imperial state. By then, Sharia law had established a specific system of religious, legal, and cultural practices. Extremists believe that caliphate ideologies should be reactivated to bring to an end polluting European-adapted political systems across all African countries (Wibisono et al, 2019).

Resistance of European Civilisation: Islamic terrorist groups operational in Africa reject and resist the imposition of European education and its cultural system of colonial social organisation, which replaced and degraded the earlier Islamic traditional values, beliefs, and customs guided by Sharia law, the Quran, and the Sunnah (Agbibo, 2013, p.160). The groups are inspired by

Qur'anic teachings that inspire them to engage in combatant jihad to resist non-Islamic civilisations. Their goal is to Islamize modern science and technology introduced by the European World, and reintroduce messianic caliphate states throughout Africa (Cook, 2004, p.129).

Within the ideological framework of the terrorist groups, European civilisation is forbidden for a true Muslim because of its corruptible contents that promote ideas of homosexuality, feminism, democracy, lesbianism, prostitution, drug abuse, critical questioning of Qur'anic texts, etc., vices that are opposed to Islamic traditions. The groups believe that European civilisation should be aligned with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Their primary goal is to crack down on infidels and deal with those practising European ideology paganism (Searcy, 2019; Igboin, 2021, pp.426-427).

Terrorist groups further assert that European civilisation is associated with attempts by evangelical Christians to dominate African politics, build personal economic empires, and convert Muslims to Christianity. Human sufferings fuelled by economic poverty and disease epidemics are being blamed on the European-trained modern elites who are currently occupying political offices. To them, current African Governance systems are unjust, corrupt, un-Islamic, and have no divine origin. Occupying forces, Muslims, and non-Muslims in Africa, exhibiting European values, are the focus of their violent struggle. Enforced European values on Muslim communities are viewed as responsible for the degradation, humiliation, pollution, and extinction of Islamic caliphate cultural and social values (Agbibo, 2013, p.159; Hutchins, 2017, p.7).

Heavenly Benefits: The after-earthly life benefits are the driving forces behind the Muslim extremists in Africa; they look forward to reaching a glorious land. To them, the fastest path to the benefits of heavenly blessings is through military jihad (Macdonald, 1966, pp. 344-354).

As such, the abducted recruits are indoctrinated with the after-earth better life for martyrs in Paradise, and given the fact that many of them are traumatised due to earthly basic life survival struggles and loss of their loved ones, they engage in suicide bombings as an easy escape to inherit paradise luxuries (Agbibo, 2013, pp.160-165).

Conversely, the youngest female bomb-carriers are duped and dragged by relatives, but older bombers volunteer without coercion. In the year 2017, Boko Haram used 115 children – 38 boys and 77 girls as human bombs (Ali, 2018, p.3). Volunteer female suicide bombers are mostly

frustrated widows who are moved by jihad commitment to access direct entry into Paradise and reunite with their deceased husbands (International Crisis Group, 2016, pp.10-11).

To the contrary, jihadi terrorism missions in Africa go beyond terrorising people; their primary goal is to restore sanity in a corrupt society, to instil upright moral living, and to spur social-economic development (Ramlan, 2016, p.35). However, revolutionists are locked in the docile patriarchal Caliphate era. Outdated Caliphate methodologies rooted in Arabian culture may be slow to address the changing needs of African people, whose Black cultural ethics promote collective responsiveness to address social grievances, inculcate moral values, and influence socio-economic transformation. Indeed, given the fact that Islam, like Christianity, is a foreign religion whose revolutionary creeds are partially compatible with African Black Culture ideologies, it is uncertain whether radical Islamic movements in Africa can attain Caliphate goals.

Profoundly, the narratives on terrorism and violent extremism reveal that politics and religion play complementary roles in driving revolutionary change. The cardinal duty of the state is to ensure that legislative laws are enforced to spur socio-economic transformation. On the other hand, the cardinal role of religious leaders is to provide faith-based social services that equip people with the life skills to relate productively with their interfaith neighbours. Inability of governments and religious institutions to execute their obligations equitably, transparently, and in upholding the sanctity of the core beliefs of African cultural heritages, Christianity, and Islam in respective interfaith engagements; the anomaly can create a vacuum that can keep on igniting terrorism and violent extremism in Africa.

7.0 Christian-Muslim Relationship-Building Initiatives in Africa

In Africa, there are several government and nongovernmental initiatives aimed at fostering productive engagements of Christians and Muslims. Their endeavours, which cannot be underestimated, have yielded positive results in specialised areas of interfaith programme outreach (Yousif, 2020, p. 9).

A case in point in Africa is the Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove) organisation, which is purposely driven to engage cultural, government, and religious leaders to aid young Christians and Muslims aged 18-35 to minimise violent extremism. Academicians, clergy, innovative artists, cultural leaders, government officials, and Faith-Based organisation workers are

equipped with the skills to foster a deep understanding of the religious practices and beliefs of interfaith neighbours. Cultural activities and sports are utilised to promote peaceful interfaith coexistence (Yousif, 2020, pp.9-10).

Another organisation that works in Africa to combat terrorism and violent extremism is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The body works with governments, cultural institutions, Christian and Muslim clergy, and leaders of Faith-Based Organisations to foster interfaith relationships. Through participatory engagements, commendable results were registered in the year 2022 (UNDP, 2023, p.29), thus outlined as follows:

In **Mali**, UNDP supported the Ministry responsible for Religious Affairs in establishing a consultative framework for religious actors and in developing a Prevention of Violent Extremism guide for Preachers and Sermons. 120 religious actors, including 29 women, were trained using the guide, and 1,000 copies were printed and disseminated.

In **Morocco**, UNDP released a short documentary on promoting tolerance in the prison environment through the innovative peer educator approach.

In **Sri Lanka**, UNDP supported the public movement Minor Matters in developing a Virtual Museum of Religious Freedom. The virtual museum serves as a learning environment, encourages critical thinking about history, and highlights the root causes of misunderstandings between communities. The museum is complemented by a pioneering, stand-alone e-learning platform that promotes literacy about freedom of religion through online courses.p28

In **Sudan**, UNDP conducted religious sessions in Gezira and Khartoum and awareness sessions in five Sudanese sub-states to foster the use of religion as a tool for tolerance and acceptance. The sessions were attended by 1,204 community members.

In **Tanzania**, UNDP organised peace-building awareness workshops, held in partnership with the Global Peace Foundation, which advocated for the

involvement of religious leaders in promoting youth engagement in peace and security to build resilient communities. A total of 150 participants (68 women and 82 men) attended these workshops.

In **Somalia**, 240 religious leaders were trained on Islamic principles of peace building and conflict resolution. UNDP also worked with state-level religious affairs ministries to establish a countrywide network of like-minded religious leaders. The network aims to reduce the spread of violent extremist content and promote the tolerant message of Islam.

It is clear that peace-loving organisations are engaged in multiple programmes to combat terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. However, the interfaith building programmes appear to be Christian- and Muslim-doctrinally focused, aimed at filling gaps that instigate religious discrimination, rather than at amalgamating intersecting Biblical and Qur'anic doctrines with African social traditions to promote a new, coexistence-oriented African religious version superior to alien cultural practices that are fuelling interfaith tensions.

8.0 De-radicalisation Engagements to Minimise Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

The promotion of humanitarian services by Christianity and Islam in Africa is commendable. Through the Abrahamic religions, communities have evolved. However, Sub-Saharan Africa, a continent endowed with natural resources, cultural diversity, fertile soils, and mineral wealth, is globally ranked as home to large numbers of people affected by economic poverty fuelled by civil conflicts and the colonial education system (Barke, 2023, pp. 682-684). This then means that approaches that Christian and Muslim-based organisations are utilising to skill indigenous people to walk out of economic poverty are not amalgamated with African moral formation ethics. Nevertheless, among the diverse African tribes, there exist social traditions and orality that are relied on to inculcate acceptable lifestyles in the younger generation (Mafumbate, 2019, pp. 7-9).

Indeed, the beneficiaries of faith-based organisations in Africa are immersed in European and Arabian intellectualism, a state of confusion that is making it hard for them to observe African philosophy of communal ethics of work vis-a-vis foreign knowledge equilibrium to manipulate

the indigenous resources and walk out of interfaith hostilities, terrorism, and violent extremism (Mtebe & Mochena, 2025, pp. 8-14).

To address the foreignness embedded in the life-skills development curricula implemented by Christian and Muslim organisations, African religious leaders and theologians need to engage in constructive dialogue. Through respectful dialogue, the parties can reflect on their Black cultural ancestry, understand the lines of disagreement dividing them, and draft memoranda demonstrating interfaith cooperation.

The cooperation packet can then lead to several projects being jointly implemented. However, the key one that is much needed in the current decade is to initiate the **‘Christian-Muslim Children and Youth Development Programme,’** purposely driven to de-radicalise young people and disengage them from terrorism and violent extremes. Young people, if strategically de-radicalised, can build an interfaith, conflict-free African society that thrives on communal interconnections and moves towards socio-economic liberation.

As a matter of fact, the resultant outcome of the Christian-Muslim children and youth development programme is most likely to be reduced interfaith engagement phobia, respectful engagements with intersecting Biblical and Qur’anic scriptures, peaceful interfaith marriages, interfaith vocational employment spaces free of coercive religious conversions, the emergence of interfaith business partnerships, and minimal incidences of terrorists and extremist groups in Africa.

To the effect, how an interfaith Children and Youth organisation can be instituted and managed cannot be a puzzle for the Christian and Muslim organisations that have been in existence in Africa for decades. Their long-term field experience is clear enough that they know the science of organisational planting and nurturing. Of course, not all Christian and Muslim religious leaders can be in for a joint engagement. This can be due to deep-held interfaith hatred, or some may fear losing their autonomy. To be on the safe side, Christian and Muslim organisations can run their programmes independently, amalgamated with inclusive strands that benefit the interfaith other, or they can work on a joint Christian-Muslim children and Youth development programme while maintaining the unique identity of their organisations; but a singular, balanced leadership managed interfaith organisation would be much more impactful.

Inherently, for de-radicalisation to be achieved, the interfaith programme's activities need to be customised to African knowledge-transfer approaches. African society is endowed with rich social traditions that have not been integrated into Europeanised and Arabised curricula to support intellectual development and respond to indigenous intellectual needs.

In Africa, there are oral traditions, sacred objects and spaces, and literary works utilised to enforce moral values and transmit knowledge to future generations. However, religious organisations in Africa rely on Europeanised and Arabised life-skills development curricula to transmit foreign moral values, thereby leaving young people disconnected from their indigenous language heritages (Bota, 2009).

In reality, the innovativeness of human beings, including all creatures, is expressed through their innate languages that are clearly understandable within their contexts (Palmer, 1969, pp. 134-135). The religious language expressions of Christianity and Islam were crafted in the desert, summer, autumn, spring, winter, and hostile cultural environments. Having Africans whose moral and ethical expressions result from tropical life experiences, bombarded with foreign knowledge, to transition to the Abrahamic language expression universe influenced by prophets, apostles, satanic forces, and Angels is quite cumbersome.

In addition, adapting to the European empirical framework, which is grounded in molecules bonded by atoms, is particularly complex for Africans who interact with nature through elders, ancestors, spirits, and gods (Ndemanu, 2018, pp. 73-74).

Indeed, incorporating intersecting Christian and Islamic practices into indigenous African language expressions to de-radicalise young people is most likely to inspire them to align their social traditions with interfaith coexistence language expressions that are clearly understandable and applicable to their cultural contexts.

9.0 Christian-Muslim Organisational Local Revenue Mobilisation

In reality, Christian and Islamic teachings encourage followers to contribute a portion of their income to support religious projects. In Christian circles, 10% and generous giving are highlighted in several biblical scriptures, encouraging believers to support the needs of church workers, widows, orphans, and the homeless. Those who give wholeheartedly are believed to attain earthly

providence beyond their expectations (Scalisi, 2018). On the other hand, Islamic teachings encourage adherents to contribute 2.5% of their financial resources to support vulnerable groups in society (Dawam et al., 2021, p. 128). In that way, the givers' incomes are purified, Muslims are freed from greed, and they receive divine wisdom to grow their finances in increasing measure (Sambidge, 2022; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2023).

Scanning through the giving mandates of Christians and Muslims, even when the sacred texts do not display the yardsticks that can be relied upon to measure how the giver's financial resources are purified and progressively grow, there exist religious convictions that influence adherents to extend support to alleviate economic poverty in society. However, the financial giving yardsticks are Judeo-Greek-Roman and Arabian cultural constructs. In African cultures, giving to support society's critical needs is not tied to percentages or irrational premises. Africans are driven by a sense of collective responsibility to support their neighbours on both celebratory and grieving days. In addition, in response to the voices of cultural, political, and religious leaders, Africans have, since time immemorial, contributed their resources to support short- and long-term projects sustainably (Njideaka, 2024).

For instance, in response to the infrastructural development to facilitate higher education, the president of Botswana, influenced by the cultural heritage of collective responsiveness, mobilised households that owned cattle in the 1960s to voluntarily contribute a cow to raise funds to build a university. The drive was so successful, and in the shortest time, the university learning space and offices were set up. Likewise, in the cultural context of Kenya, the slogan *Harambee* – meaning collective effort - is used to invite the community to offer technical and financial support to build schools, health centres, worship spaces, water points, etc. (Njideaka, 2024).

While diverse African communities have different approaches to mobilising local resources to address their community needs, all are driven by a spirit of collective responsiveness to overcome common life-threatening challenges (Njideaka, 2024).

To the contrary, as clearly spelt out in Tables 3 and 6, Faith-based organisations in Africa are receiving funding from overseas countries. Such compassionate support is commendable, especially during the early stages of organisational growth and when an embryonic community-driven project is being nurtured with well-crafted, long-term, sustainable revenue generation

strategies. However, over-reliance on external funding is risky, as when support ceases, the organisation is most likely to go extinct. Next, foreign support is most likely to breed a lethargic society with a dependency mentality. Finally, those who control finances are most likely to impose ideas that conflict with the recipient culture's dynamics. Therefore, developing a contextualised resource-mobilisation strategy is paramount.

10.0 Conclusion

Terrorism and violent extremism as military strategies to inflict massive loss on society and send waves of fear to the occupying political powers and indifferent religious others is on the increase in Sub-Saharan Africa. On the continent, terrorism is driven by religious ideologies that seek to Islamize indigenous communities and propagate the Caliphate agenda. Despite the fact that some people are coerced into joining the movements, economic benefits, fanatical commitment to religious ideologies, hatred for European civilisation, and a desire to influence radical social change are some of the push factors driving adults and young people to join radical religious groups.

In addition, it is observed that Christian and Muslim organisations operating in Africa are influenced by overseas funders to establish robust environments of converts within communities where charity-driven services are offered. In pursuit of their goals, they work hard to convert non-adherents to their religion. On the ground, foreign influence is reflected in the design of the education curriculum and the enforcement of foreign moral values. It is such interreligious competitions for converts, promotion of foreign cultures, and struggle for prominence that have led to the emergence of terrorist groups.

Certainly, if locally sustainable Christian-Muslim Children and Youth Empowerment Programmes are not initiated to influence contextualised interfaith life skill development engagements, then incidents of terrorism and radical extremism will continue to explode like wildfire in Africa.

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