

THE COMMUNITY OWN RESOURCE PERSONS MODEL: A CASE STUDY OF YUMBE DISTRICT IN UGANDA, IMPLEMENTED BY MCJL UNDER THE JOINT INITIATIVE FOR STRATEGIC RELIGIOUS ACTION PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The Community Own Resource Persons (CORPs) Model, developed in Yumbe District, Uganda, addresses escalating tensions between predominantly Muslim and Christian populations by enhancing interfaith tolerance and social cohesion. This case study reveals how community-selected individuals, integrated into local faith structures, facilitate conflict resolution, advocacy, and education through a participatory learning approach. The model emphasizes inclusivity by ensuring representation of women and youth, fostering a collective resilience against harmful traditional practices and facilitating awareness of Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB). Data collected indicated significant improvements in community well-being, with CORPs mediating land disputes, advocating for property rights, and promoting communal harmony. Despite logistical challenges, the model has successfully mobilized faith leaders, created referral networks, and utilized social media for outreach. The findings underscore the crucial role of faith actors in peace building, advocating for enhanced support for inclusive dialogues that protect marginalized voices. In conclusion, the CORPs model presents a scalable framework that not only mitigates existing tensions but also contributes to broader national identity and unity by addressing the diverse cultural and religious dynamics within Yumbe District. Recommendations include expanding training programs for faith leaders and integrating CORPs into broader community development initiatives to further support social resilience.

Keywords: Community Resilience, Interfaith Dialogue and Social Cohesion.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

CAFOD	– Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
CDO	– Community Development Officer
CFPU	– Child and Family Protection Unit
CID	– Criminal Investigations Department
CLO	- Community Liaison Officer
CORPs	- Community Own Resource Persons
CRID	– Communities Richer in Diversity
CSF	- Civil Society Fund
DPC	– District Police Commander
EU	– European Union
DGF	– Democratic Governance Facility
FGDs	– Focused Group Discussions
FoRB	– Freedom of Religion and Belief
FP-PACF-UK	– Family Planning Positive Action Fund for United Kingdom
HTPs	– Harmful Traditional Practices
OC	– Officer in Charge
JISRA	- Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action
KII	– Key Informant Interview
LC	– Local Council
MCJL	- Muslim Centre for Justice and Law
M&E	– Monitoring and Evaluation
UJCC	– Uganda Joint Christian Council
UK	- United Kingdom
UKAID	– United Kingdom Aid for International Development
UNDP	– United Nations Development Programme
USAID	– United States Agency for International Development
MHNBCH	– Maternal Health New Born and Child Health

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

This publication is about the CORPs Model as the key study focus. It highlights the problem that the CORPs Model is intended to address, draws attention to the research questions, objectives for the study and provides a theoretical frame-work for which the CORPs model should be implemented.

1.1 THE INTRODUCTION TO THE CORPs MODEL

The CORPs (Community Own Resource Persons) Model is an innovative and strategic approach designed to harness the social capital within communities to promote social cohesion, religious tolerance, and respect for human rights, particularly the right to freedom of religion and belief. This model recognizes that community resource persons—individuals with special knowledge, skills, and influence—are critical agents of change capable of fostering peaceful coexistence and counteracting the rising incidents of religious intolerance, extremism, and discrimination in diverse societies. In many communities, especially those affected by poverty, traditional and faith leaders serve as key convergent actors who can influence attitudes and behaviors towards mutual understanding, acceptance, and respect for diversity. By engaging these community resource persons, the CORPs Model aims to create a sustainable platform for dialogue, education, and community-led conflict prevention, aligning with both national and international commitments to religious freedom and human rights.

The foundation of the CORPs Model lies in recognizing the importance of resource persons such as faith leaders, community volunteers, local government officials, health workers, security personnel, teachers, parents, and learners, who are embedded within the social fabric of communities. Among these, faith actors—church pastors, mosque imams, and other religious leaders—are particularly influential because of their moral authority, community trust, and ability to mobilize congregations towards peacebuilding and tolerance. These individuals often possess a deep understanding of their communities' cultural and religious dynamics, making them well-positioned to address misconceptions, challenge stereotypes, and promote messages of harmony rooted in religious teachings.

International human rights instruments, notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, explicitly guarantee the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration affirms that everyone has the right to hold, change, and manifest their beliefs peacefully. These rights are fundamental because they protect both believers and non-believers, allowing individuals to decide freely what they believe and how they wish to practice or observe their faith. The right to religious freedom encompasses a range of activities, including worship, teaching, observance, and expression, whether privately or publicly, without undue interference or persecution. This freedom is essential for individual dignity and for fostering societal harmony, particularly in pluralistic societies where multiple religions coexist.

Religious freedom also entails the promotion of religious diversity, equality, and interfaith understanding. It encourages communities to raise awareness about different faiths and beliefs, fostering mutual respect and reducing prejudiced attitudes that may lead to conflict. In many religious traditions, including Christianity, Islam, and Protestantism, the importance of freedom of conscience is a core tenet. For instance, the Catholic Church emphasizes that faith must be embraced freely—no one should be coerced into accepting religious beliefs. Similarly, Islamic teachings, such as Quran 2:256, state that there can be no compulsion in religion, and Quran 10:99 affirms that faith must be a matter of personal conviction. These religious doctrines underscore the importance of voluntary faith and underscore that religious diversity is part of divine design, as suggested in Quran 5:48. Protestant beliefs also emphasize the role of free will and individual choice in responding to God's love, advocating for societal structures that respect different opinions and uphold freedom of conscience.

In Uganda, the constitutional framework reflects these principles by promoting religious freedom and prohibiting discrimination based on religion. The Ugandan constitution explicitly states that every person has the right to practice and manifest their religion, participate in religious organizations, and be free from discrimination or persecution based on their faith. Uganda's diverse religious landscape includes Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs, with no official state religion. Despite this constitutional

guarantee, the country has experienced challenges related to religious intolerance, often driven by extremists or societal tensions. Incidents of violence, discrimination, and harassment against individuals or communities based on their religious beliefs have raised concerns about rising intolerance and the need for proactive measures to promote peace and understanding.

In response to these challenges, the CORPs Model was developed as a community-centered approach that leverages the influence of faith and community leaders to promote social cohesion. The model involves selecting and training resource persons—particularly faith actors from churches and mosques—who demonstrate social influence and a commitment to peacebuilding. These resource persons serve as catalysts for community dialogue, peace education, and conflict prevention initiatives, working to counteract misinformation, stereotypes, and extremist narratives. By engaging trusted community figures, the model aims to create an enabling environment where diverse communities can coexist peacefully, respecting each other's beliefs and practices.

The effectiveness of the CORPs Model hinges on several core principles. First, it emphasizes community participation and ownership, ensuring that local leaders and resource persons are active agents in designing and implementing peacebuilding activities. Second, it recognizes the importance of religious teachings and doctrines that advocate for tolerance, compassion, and understanding. By integrating religious narratives that promote peace, the model aligns faith-based messages with broader human rights principles. Third, it promotes dialogue and mutual understanding through community forums, interfaith dialogues, and peace campaigns that foster personal connections and break down prejudiced attitudes.

Furthermore, the CORPs Model seeks to address the root causes of religious intolerance, such as misinformation, economic disparities, and social marginalization. It encourages resource persons to serve as bridges between different communities, mediating conflicts and promoting a culture of peace rooted in shared values and respect for diversity. The model also emphasizes continuous capacity-building for resource persons, equipping them with conflict resolution skills, knowledge of human rights, and strategies to counter extremism.

In conclusion, the CORPs Model is a holistic, community-driven approach to promoting religious freedom, social cohesion, and peace. By harnessing the influence of trusted community resource persons—particularly faith actors—the model creates a sustainable platform for dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect. It aligns with international human rights standards and religious teachings that emphasize the importance of freedom of conscience and belief, recognizing that peace and development are rooted in respecting and celebrating diversity. As communities continue to grapple with challenges related to religious intolerance, the CORPs Model offers a promising pathway to foster inclusive societies where everyone can practice their beliefs freely, safely, and harmoniously. The CORPs Model is rooted in the recognition that resource persons within communities—such as security personnel, health workers, faith leaders, community volunteers, local officials, and educators—play a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion and promoting religious freedom. In many impoverished communities, traditional and faith leaders emerge as key convergent actors capable of influencing attitudes and behaviors towards tolerance and understanding, aligning with the principles enshrined in international human rights treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These documents emphasize the fundamental right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, which includes the right to worship, practice, and manifest beliefs privately or publicly without fear of persecution.

The CORPs Model leverages these community resource persons, especially faith actors from churches and mosques, to serve as catalysts for peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding, addressing rising incidents of religious intolerance in Uganda. Given Uganda's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom and its diverse religious landscape—including Christianity, Islam, and other faiths—the model aims to harness the

social capital of faith leaders and community members to promote harmony, counter extremism, and ensure that the principles of religious freedom are upheld at grassroots levels. By engaging these resource persons, the model not only strengthens community resilience against religious intolerance but also aligns with religious teachings that advocate for freedom of conscience and pluralism, as seen in Catholic doctrine, Quranic verses, and Protestant beliefs. Ultimately, the CORPs Model seeks to create a sustainable platform where faith communities can collaboratively promote peace, respect diversity, and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens to practice their religion freely and without fear.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE CORPs MODEL

The study was conducted in Yumbe district whose population is mainly Aringa sub-tribe of the Lugbara ethnic group (93%). The district is composed of 3 major faiths. Majority of people affiliate with Islam (76%) followed by Church of Uganda and the Catholic Church. Since 2018, conflicts in the area had taken a religious angle between Christians and Muslims. The CORPs model was aimed at promoting tolerance and peaceful co-existence among people from different faiths and cultures in Yumbe District through interfaith and intercultural activities. They were highly recommended by the leadership for community engagement. A selection of 30 Community Own Resource Persons were deployed, trained and rolled out for community intervention.

1.2.1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research problem centers on understanding how the Community Own Resource Persons (CORPs) Model can effectively foster interfaith dialogue, social cohesion, and conflict resolution in Yumbe District, Uganda, amidst longstanding religious and cultural tensions. Specifically, it seeks to explore the extent to which community-selected faith actors can mediate disputes, promote inclusivity of marginalized groups such as women and youth, and leverage existing faith structures and social media platforms to build resilience and harmony among diverse communities, despite logistical challenges and traditional practices that often resist change.

Demographics in Yumbe district at the time of the study stood at 76% Muslim majority, a significant deviation from Uganda's overall 85% Christian population.

Religious Tensions included Christians allege that Muslims use their majority status to marginalize them. Muslims claim Christians are covertly converting Muslim youth. Both communities compete for local government positions, contracts, and access to land and water resources.

The impact on coexistence was observed that continuous competition fuels mistrust, leading to potential conflict and challenges in maintaining peace, yet Yumbe has a unique religious landscape necessitates dialogue and reconciliation efforts to foster harmonious relations between the faiths. The model enhances interfaith tolerance and social cohesion.

1.2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question 1.0: What is a CORPs' Model and its role in Peacebuilding within the faith community in Yumbe district.

Question 2.0: To what extent did the CORPs' Model contribute to peacebuilding in Yumbe district.

Question 3.0: How did the CORPs' Model promote inclusivity of marginalized groups for peace building within Yumbe district.

1.2.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective 1.0: To find out what is a CORPs' Model and its role in Peacebuilding within a faith community in Yumbe district.

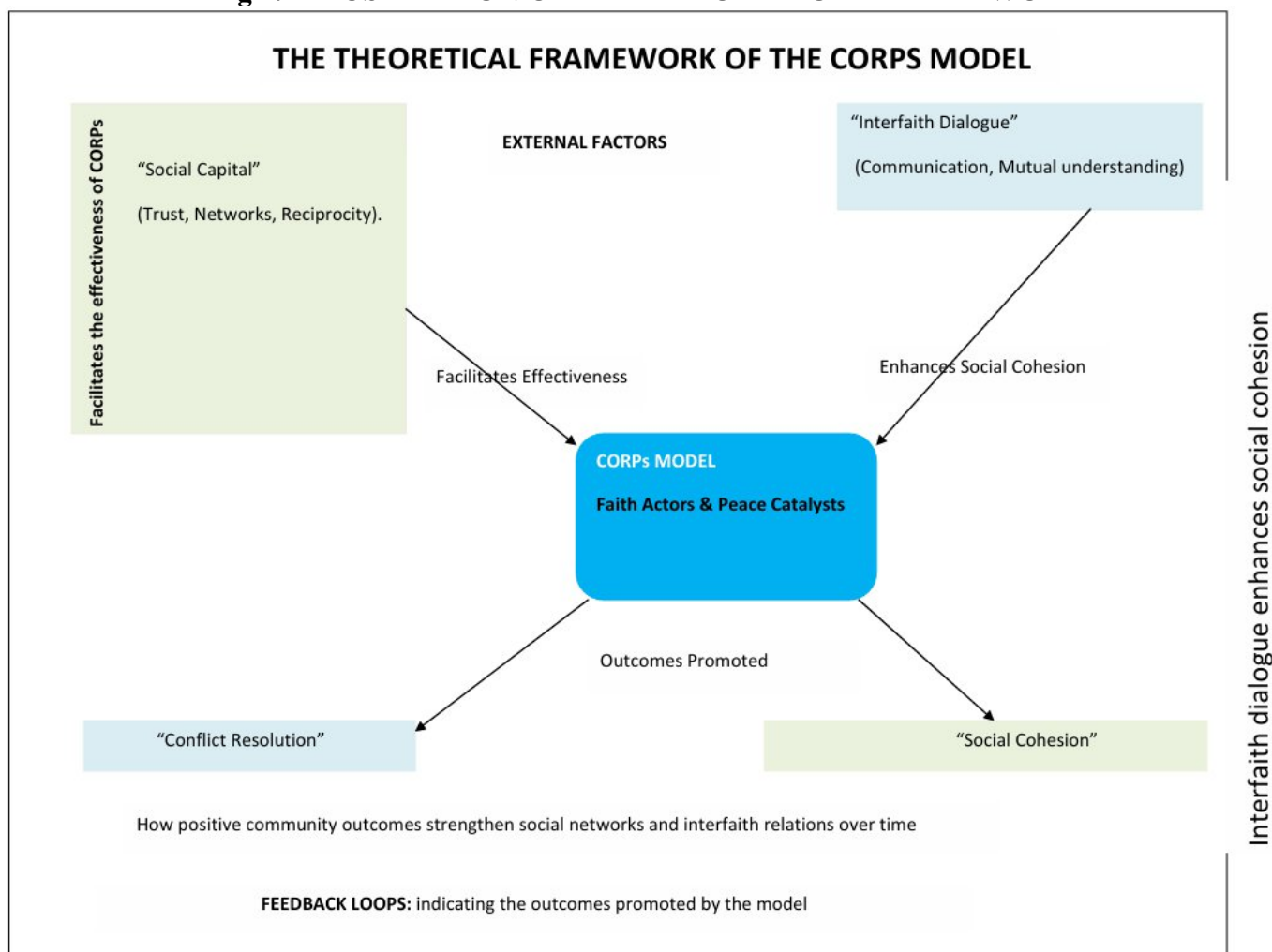
Objective 2.0: To explore the extent to which the CORPs' Model contributed to peacebuilding in Yumbe district.

Objective 3.0: To examine how the CORPs' Model promoted inclusivity of marginalized groups for peace-building within Yumbe district.

1.2.5 THEORETICAL FRAME-WORK

The theoretical framework underpinning this study draws from Social Capital Theory and Interfaith Dialogue Theory. Social Capital Theory posits that strong social networks, trust, and reciprocal relationships within communities facilitate cooperation and collective action, which are essential for conflict resolution and social cohesion. In this context, the CORPs Model leverages existing social ties and trust within faith communities to promote peacebuilding initiatives. Interfaith Dialogue Theory emphasizes the importance of communication and mutual understanding among different religious groups to reduce prejudice and foster harmony. This theory supports the idea that structured interfaith interactions, facilitated by faith actors, can bridge religious divides and contribute to social cohesion. Together, these frameworks provide a lens to analyze how faith-based actors (CORPs) can mobilize social capital and facilitate meaningful interfaith dialogue to address conflicts and promote sustainable peace in Yumbe District.

Fig 1. ILLUSTRATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



1.2.6 EXPLANATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The above simple conceptual diagram illustrates the theoretical framework of the CORPs Model. The diagram visually demonstrates how the CORPs Model operates within the context of social capital and interfaith dialogue to achieve peace and social cohesion. It illustrates the relationship:

1. Central Box: "CORPs Model" – representing the community-based faith actors.
2. Arrows from External Factors: These are twofold;
 - To the left: "Social Capital" (trust, networks, reciprocity). An arrow pointing toward the CORPs Model indicating that social capital facilitates the effectiveness of CORPs.
 - To the right: "Interfaith Dialogue" (communication, mutual understanding). An arrow pointing toward the CORPs Model indicating that interfaith dialogue enhances social cohesion.
3. Inner Arrows: From the CORPs Model tends towards:
 - "Conflict Resolution" and "Social Cohesion" – indicating the outcomes promoted by the model.
4. Feedback Loops: Social capital facilitates the effectiveness of CORPs.
Feedback Loops: From "Conflict Resolution" and "Social Cohesion" back to "Social Capital" and "Interfaith Dialogue," illustrating how positive community outcomes strengthen social networks and interfaith relations over time.

RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION:

Literature was reviewed in relation to the CORPs Model. The available literature provides information on the model and its role in peacebuilding within the faith community. Similar literature revealed the extent to which the CORPs model contributed to peacebuilding and how the model promoted inclusivity of marginalized groups in peace building.

2.1 THE CORPS' MODEL AND ITS ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING WITHIN A FAITH COMMUNITY.

The literature on community-owned resource persons (CORPs) underscores their pivotal role in grassroots peacebuilding, especially within faith communities, by serving as local agents of change who facilitate dialogue, foster mutual understanding, and promote social cohesion. Studies highlight that CORPs, often trained by faith-based organizations, leverage religious texts, narratives, and cultural practices to challenge prejudices and stereotypes, thereby transforming individual perceptions and improving interfaith relations (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty, 2010). In contexts like Uganda's West Nile region, where historical conflicts and religious divisions persist, CORPs act as mediators who mobilize communities through culturally resonant activities such as sports, music, and drama, bridging divides and nurturing peaceful coexistence (Mbugua, 2022). The case of UJCC and MCJL demonstrates that empowering local faith and cultural leaders, along with youth as CORPs, can effectively instill values of tolerance and respect, contributing to both social stability and peacebuilding. This approach aligns with the broader grassroots peacebuilding framework emphasizing participatory, community-driven processes that utilize religious tools and narratives to foster sustainable peace at the micro-level (Richmond, 2007; Lederach, 2005).

The literature surrounding the Community Own Resource Persons (CORPs) Model emphasizes its role as a participatory and culturally sensitive approach to fostering social cohesion and interfaith dialogue in conflict-prone contexts like Yumbe District, located in west Nile within Uganda. Scholars have highlighted how faith-based community engagement can serve as a powerful tool for peacebuilding, especially in diverse settings where religious identity intersects with social and cultural norms. Works by Anderson (2010) and Hunt et al. (2013) underscore the significance of local faith leaders in mediating conflicts and promoting inclusive dialogue, aligning with the CORPs' strategy of leveraging religious structures for community mobilization.

2.2 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CORPS' MODEL CONTRIBUTES TO PEACEBUILDING.

The literature on grassroots peacebuilding underscores the significance of local, community-driven approaches in fostering sustainable peace, especially in post-conflict settings like Uganda's West Nile region. The case of the UJCC and MCJL initiatives in Yumbe exemplifies how engaging faith leaders, utilizing religious texts, narratives, and cultural tools, combined with activities like peer outreach, dialogues, sports, and media, can effectively transform individual perceptions and improve interfaith relations. Theoretical frameworks such as Lederach's pyramidal model emphasize empowering grassroots actors—particularly youth—to act as change agents, fostering everyday peace and tolerance at micro-levels, which cumulatively contribute to broader social stability. Empirical evidence from the Ugandan context corroborates that interventions rooted in religious values and community participation can reduce hostility, dispel stereotypes, and promote peaceful coexistence, illustrating the practical utility of integrating faith-based tools within grassroots peacebuilding strategies to address complex socio-religious conflicts.

The participatory learning and action approach employed in the CORPs model resonates with Freire's (1970) emphasis on empowerment through dialogue, fostering community ownership of peace initiatives.

The Community Own Resource Person (CORPs) Model is increasingly recognized in the literature as an effective grassroots approach to peacebuilding, especially in contexts marked by religious and cultural tensions like Yumbe District, Uganda. Rooted in social capital and interfaith dialogue theories, the model leverages trusted faith community members to foster social cohesion, mediate conflicts, and promote inclusivity among marginalized groups such as women and youth. Studies highlight that faith-based community engagement, through trained local faith actors, can enhance interfaith understanding, reduce prejudice, and build resilience against extremism and intolerance (Kramer & Weller, 2013; Ager & Strang, 2004).

In Uganda, despite constitutional protections for religious freedom, incidents of religious intolerance persist, making models like CORPs vital for promoting peace at the community level by harnessing existing social networks and religious structures (Kasozi & Rwebangira, 2020).

Such approaches align with global findings that community-driven, faith-based peace initiatives are more sustainable because they are rooted in local social capital and cultural contexts (Mohan & Stokke, 2017).

2.3 HOW THE CORPS' MODEL PROMOTED INCLUSIVITY OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN PEACE BUILDING.

The literature on how the Corps' model promoted inclusivity in peacebuilding emphasizes a bottom-up, community-focused approach that leverages faith-based tools, religious narratives, and local leadership to foster mutual understanding and tolerance among marginalized groups. Studies highlight that training youth as change agents—Community Own Resource Persons (CORPs)—and deploying peer outreach, dialogue forums, and edutainment activities like music, drama, and sports effectively change individual perceptions and reduce hostilities, especially in post-conflict settings like Yumbe, Uganda.

This approach aligns with conflict transformation theories, particularly Lederach's pyramid of leadership and the concept of everyday peace articulated by Mac Ginty, emphasizing that peace initiatives rooted in local religious and cultural values resonate deeply with communities, building social networks and fostering collective actions.

Religious texts and narratives serve as powerful unifying tools, promoting forgiveness, empathy, and shared humanity, which contribute to improved interfaith relations and long-term peace. Empirical evidence from the CRID project demonstrates that such models, combining grassroots peacebuilding with religious and cultural tools, can effectively promote inclusivity among marginalized groups, transforming perceptions and practices at the micro-level, thereby laying the groundwork for broader societal reconciliation.

Furthermore, literature from the Interfaith Network (2019) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2018) supports the integration of women and youth in peacebuilding efforts, a core element of the CORPs framework, which enhances resilience against harmful traditional practices and social divisions. Studies also recognize the critical role of social media in amplifying community voices and expanding outreach, as documented by Castells (2012), which the CORPs model effectively harnesses through its social media platforms.

Despite logistical challenges noted in the Ugandan context, the literature advocates for community-driven, faith-based models as scalable solutions that contribute to national identity and social resilience, aligning with the findings from Yumbe. Overall, the existing body of research affirms that faith actors, when appropriately mobilized and supported, can serve as catalysts for peace, social cohesion, and inclusive development, reinforcing the potential of models like CORPs to address complex interfaith dynamics in diverse communities.

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION:

The methodology used for the research study was qualitative in nature; a sample size was defined in due course of implementation, which was supportive in obtaining results within a confined area of coverage.

3.1 QUALITATIVE METHODS

The qualitative data collection methods were used including document review, after determining the research topic and goal. Taking into account what to study and why. This guided in choosing relevant secondary data sources. Explored existing data, organized, compared the data and analyzed the data. Document review entailed gathering data from existing information resources; as a low-cost strategy compared to field outreaches and visits, as the primary costs were relatively high in terms of travel refunds, executive time and phone communication rates. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted for in-depth information from 15 community people selected for their first-hand knowledge about the CORPs Model as an interest focus. Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), were conducted with individuals who were viewed as possessing specialized knowledge or experience that was crucial.

Community-driven data collection was highly regarded through engagements with faith leaders and local community members. Engaging with a selection of respondents was vital for accessing insider knowledge, particularly on sensitive religious concerns that would not emerge in focus group discussions.

Reflection Meetings and thematic dialogues were deployed for data collection as an integral part of the project implementation to reduce cost of the data collection and leverage on the opportunities of accessing respondents, as part of the implementation approach for the CORPs Model.

Sample size; A sample size of 30 CORPs from the different religious sects were selected (16 males, 14 females) without bias in faith. Although in the study area, the *Islamic faith, comprised of 76% in Yumbe district. The chairperson of the interreligious faith was from the Islamic faith. Muslims were effectively reached through: -*

- a) Imam at Masjid
- b) County Sheikh
- c) District Qadhi Structures

The Christian faith, in Yumbe district comprised of 24% of the population. The Catholics were engaged more through the father, Catechist, Parish Priests and Mothers Union is respected and active. The Church of Uganda worked effectively through; Archdeacon, Parish priests, Church teachers and these structures play pivotal roles of Sensitisation, Guidance and counselling, Mobilisation, Spiritual build-up of togetherness and brotherhood, Peaceful conflict resolution, making referrals to high authorities.

The African Traditional Religious belief included the Aringa cultural leader, represented by the prime minister/his deputy.

The Other structures to which the Community Own Persons network for collaboration included the LC 1 at the village, Parish chief, CDO, Sub-County Chief, youth representatives and family influencers.

3.2 THE IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH OF THE CORPs MODEL

The Participatory Learning and Action oriented approach was used right from mobilization of participants for the meetings and other engagements with a human rights-based lens. Discussions were emphasized on emerging issues and recommendations for improvement. Reflection on attitudes, behaviours and relationships, always enabled and empowered people to share, analyze and enhance their knowledge on practices in their life. Social measures were devised to prohibit harmful practices including discussing them, providing for adequate community driven solutions. Although traditional practices were ever merging in form of experiences that were indigenous to different teachings, cultures and traditions, including some norms that were bad and others that were categorically destructive, cruel and wasteful. The issues emphasized; why some people in Yumbe still perceived these norms as authoritative and why these norms often resisted change at community and family level.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION:

The findings about the CORPs Model revealed results on the clear understanding of the relevancy of the CORPs Model in peacebuilding, selection criteria of suitable respondents used in the model, dominant roles, links that accelerate community actions and outstanding performance beyond expectations by the model.

4.1 THE RESULTS ON UNDERSTANDING THE CORPs MODEL

It was established that; The Community Own Resource Persons (CORPs) Model, is a scrutiny faith based applied approach changing individual perceptions towards members of the other religion and improving relations between Muslims and Christians as developed in Yumbe District, Uganda. It purposively addresses escalating tensions between predominantly Muslim and Christian populations by enhancing interfaith tolerance and social cohesion. Key components of the model include: community selection, integration into faith structures, participatory learning.

The CORPs Model in peacebuilding is a community-driven approach that leverages trusted local individuals, particularly faith leaders, community volunteers, and influential members, to promote social cohesion, interfaith dialogue, and conflict resolution. These resource persons are selected based on their influence, credibility, and commitment to peace, and are trained to facilitate community discussions, mediate disputes, advocate for marginalized groups, and spread messages of tolerance and understanding.

The model emphasizes participatory engagement, harnessing existing social networks and religious structures to build resilience against tensions, reduce prejudices, and foster inclusive peace processes at the grassroots level. By empowering local actors to serve as peace ambassadors, the CORPs Model aims to create sustainable, community-led solutions that address conflicts rooted in religious, cultural, or social differences.

4.1.2 THE SELECTION PROCESS OF CORPs

“Everyone is hungry for peace. To achieve it, we need to include all voices and help build collective strength in the peace process across religious divides.” One of the participants in KII.

Faith and belief played a large part in shaping customs, practices and frameworks of wellbeing. Understanding religious dynamics in these contexts was essential in identifying drivers of social cohesion,

or conversely of inequalities and divisions. The dynamics shaped the appropriate intervention and support for action by religious leaders.

Top Religious leaders were identified and used to recommend person with qualities that best fit the roles played by CORPs. These were used because they are always in direct contact with wider community networks and with the local administration. Their networks are built on relationships based on mutual trust and leverage on multi-dimensional interventions. Religious leaders are often able to reach the most vulnerable with assistance and social information and identify those most in need. They provide pastoral and spiritual support during community emergencies and other social challenges and can advocate for the needs of vulnerable populations even when in disputes.

We guided Religious Leaders to include **Women** and **Youth** leaders for their meaningful role in building resilience and sharing effective communication, providing psychosocial and spiritual support, promoting inclusion and countering stigma and they enable the adaptation of traditional practices.

It was established that the Power of Social Media Influencers triggered the formation of a common communication platform linking religious leaders with the CORPs. The Social media influencers' platform was valuable to local partners for strengthening linkages for referrals to the extent of expanding their reach and connecting with new audiences.

"We never thought we would reach this point as community own resource persons, we thought faith communities were a disconnect especially among Muslims and Christians for years down in Yumbe," said one of the faith actors in a FGD.

4.2 DOMINANT ROLES OF THE CORPs MODEL IN THE COMMUNITY STRUCTURAL SETTING

The roles of the CORPs within the existing structures were mainly perceived as morally supportive to the community in nature; including cascading information on Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) through sensitisation gatherings, community mobilisation, providing guidance and counselling, Spiritual build-up of togetherness and brotherhood, Peaceful conflict resolution and making referral of cases on Harmful Traditional Practices to authorities, settling either family or community religious clashes and conflicts, community dialogues, making social announcements, Preaching and educating masses on doctrines for moral reform, officiating on ceremonies of marriages and funerals. The JISRA programme gave CORPs a mileage on Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) and referrals networking in Yumbe District. Religious actors equally made an indispensable contribution in many contexts, in bringing on board the Pentecostal and seventh day Adventist faith communities who were not first-line responders and on site before, during the project life time. Religious leaders and faith communities played a major role in saving lives and reducing conflict related disputes in Yumbe District. They were a primary source of support, comfort, guidance, and direct security, social wellbeing and social service, for the communities they serve. They shared social information to protect their own members and wider communities, which could more likely not be accepted than from other sources.

4.3 LINKS THAT ACCELERATE ACTION/ INTERVENTIONS AT COMMUNITY LEVEL:

- Learning centres like CORPs who are teachers in Schools
- Local Authorities with powers to enforce actions at community level such as CORPs holding LC1 powers and those who are parish chiefs.
- Those who work in health centres like hospital, Health centre I, II, III, IV and clinics

4.4 CASES THAT EMERGED AND WERE AMAKABLY RESOLVED BEYOND THE CORPs MODEL EXPECTATIONS

- Land cases affecting female households and workers
- Children ownership / belonging for custody responsibility
- Bride price cases at divorce

The research findings reveal that the Community Own Resource Persons (CORPs) Model has significantly contributed to promoting peace, social cohesion, and interfaith dialogue in Yumbe District, Uganda. The selection process of CORPs, primarily faith leaders, youth, and women, was based on community trust, influence, and demonstrated commitment to peacebuilding. These CORPs actively engaged in various roles, including community sensitization on religious tolerance, mediating disputes, advocating for marginalized groups, and facilitating interfaith dialogue through religious sermons, community forums, and social media platforms. Notably, the model fostered greater inclusivity by empowering women and youth as active participants in peace processes, thereby strengthening community resilience. The deployment of CORPs led to tangible outcomes such as the resolution of land disputes, reduction in interfaith tensions, and increased awareness of freedom of religion and belief (FoRB). Additionally, the integration of social media influencers expanded outreach, enhanced communication, and facilitated real-time referrals and conflict resolution. Despite logistical challenges like poor infrastructure and transportation issues, the model's community-based approach demonstrated high acceptability and sustainability, with community members expressing increased trust, mutual understanding, and collective responsibility for peaceful coexistence. Overall, these findings underscore the effectiveness of the CORPs Model in harnessing local faith actors and social networks to foster lasting peace and social harmony in divided communities.

THE DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION:

The discussion of findings on the CORPs Model highlights the available local faith structures as relied out for operation, actions or steps taken that stood out in roll-out of the CORPs Model, innovations and limitations of the Model.

5.1 THE AVAILABLE LOCAL FAITH STRUCTURES FOR OPERATION BY THE CORPs MODEL

The Locations of these structures are in Villages, Parishes, Sub-counties and the district.

The Islamic faith, comprised of 76% in Yumbe with Imams at Masjid, County Sheikh and District Qadhi Structures. Islam was the fastest-growing major religion in Yumbe district, just like other studies had established in the world.

The Christian faith, comprised of 24%. The Catholics engage more of the Father, Catechist, Parish Priests and Mothers Union is respected and active. The Church of Uganda was accessible through, Archdeacon, Parish priests, Church teachers and these structures play pivotal roles of Sensitisation, Guidance and counselling, Mobilisation, Spiritual build-up of togetherness and brotherhood, Peaceful conflict resolution, making referrals to high authorities.

The African Traditional Religious belief practitioners were mainly reached and mobilized through the Aringa cultural leader, represented by the prime minister/his deputy. The traditional languages spoken in Yumbe district included: the Aringa language (majority), Kakwa language, Madi language and the Alur language. The second most-spoken language however is Kiswahili.

The other structures to which the Community Own Persons network for collaboration like LC 1 at the village, Parish chief, CDO, Sub-County Chief, youth representatives and family influencers.

This community structure promoted a community referral mechanism in their work and these structures were then used during the referral actions including the Police and key contact persons like the DPC, CFPU, CLO, OC station. In Lower Local Governments collaboration was through a working relationship with CDO, Parish Chiefs and LCs (Local Council 1 Chairperson, Local Council II - Chairperson), District Probation Officer.

5.2 ACTIONS / STEPS TAKEN THAT STOOD OUT WITH CORPs

- Religious reconciliations on disputed properties with involvement of elders
- Sensitisation of masses on property rights using the pulpit.
- Delivering sermons during preaching on the rights for respect to each other's religious denominations.

5.3 INNOVATIONS

Surprisingly, it was later established that the Power of Social Media Influencers triggered the formation of a common communication platform linking religious leaders with the CORPs. The Social media influencers' platform was valuable to local partners for strengthening linkages for referrals to the extent of expanding their reach and connecting with new audiences. The effectiveness was checked depending on the real goal and target audience.

The three Most Precious Resources were; **Time commitment** as the most valuable asset community people had in abundance; **Energy for community support and action** was second throughout their life, people break one another's hearts, let each other down, and at times turned out not the great friends, others thought they were. **Attention for efficiency** was another precious resource that drive the passion and appreciation of each action taken, emerging as the currency of achievement.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The challenges encountered in due course of project roll-out the CORPs Model included costly transportation and logistics due to the climate changes and poor roads deep in the villages while traversing from one district to another. This could require a lot of time to successfully complete an assigned project action by a CORP consequently leaving gaps in documentation and after-action review and reporting. Additionally, some issues were so critical that required to be handled in time to reduce community disputes. Limited geographical coverage. The reach was limited to the subcounties of town council, Kululu and parts of Midgo in Yumbe district in Uganda yet the district has 8 subcounties, 45 parishes and 405 villages.

THE RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 INTRODUCTION:

The CORPs (Community Own Resource Persons) Model is a proven grassroots approach designed to foster social cohesion, resolve conflicts, and promote sustainable peace within diverse communities. Rooted in the belief that local leaders and community members are best positioned to address and manage conflicts, the model leverages the influence and trust of faith leaders, volunteers, and community stakeholders to create inclusive dialogues and promote mutual understanding. This approach has demonstrated significant success in conflict-prone areas by empowering local actors to act as peace ambassadors, thereby strengthening social fabric and reducing violence.

At its core, the CORPs Model emphasizes capacity-building through targeted training programs that equip community leaders and volunteers with conflict resolution, communication, and social cohesion skills.

These trained peace ambassadors serve as catalysts for change, facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties and addressing grievances before they escalate. The model also advocates for community engagement strategies that prioritize inclusivity, ensuring marginalized groups—including women, youth, and minority communities—are actively involved in peacebuilding processes. This inclusiveness fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for peace, paving the way for more sustainable outcomes.

Strategic support mechanisms such as logistical assistance, access to communication tools, and partnerships with local government and civil society organizations are integral to the model's success. These enable CORPs to extend their outreach, respond swiftly to emerging conflicts, and sustain peace initiatives over the long term. Additionally, integrating social media and digital platforms into peacebuilding efforts amplifies messages of harmony and educates broader audiences, especially youth, about the importance of social cohesion.

To maximize impact, it is essential to implement continuous monitoring and evaluation frameworks that track progress, identify challenges, and adapt strategies accordingly. Such systems ensure that the CORPs Model remains dynamic, relevant, and effective in different contexts. Furthermore, fostering partnerships with international donors and development agencies can mobilize resources, expand reach, and embed the model within broader peacebuilding initiatives.

Looking ahead, the potential of the CORPs Model extends beyond immediate conflict resolution. By nurturing resilient, inclusive communities, it contributes to the broader goal of social harmony and sustainable development. Strategic enhancements—including expanded stakeholder engagement, digital communication, and systematic evaluation—can further strengthen the model's capacity to create lasting peace. Ultimately, the CORPs approach exemplifies how grassroots efforts and community ownership can serve as powerful drivers of positive social change, transforming conflict zones into thriving, harmonious societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the effectiveness of the CORPs Model in peacebuilding, it is recommended to strengthen training programs for CORPs to include conflict resolution, communication, and social cohesion skills, ensuring they are well-equipped to handle complex disputes.

Additionally, providing logistical support such as transportation and communication tools can improve their outreach and responsiveness.

Engaging diverse community stakeholders, including women, youth, and marginalized groups, should be prioritized to foster inclusive peace processes.

Establishing partnerships with local government and civil society organizations can enhance sustainability and resource mobilization.

Furthermore, integrating social media and digital platforms can expand the reach and impact of peace messages, especially among youth.

Regular monitoring and evaluation should be implemented to assess progress, adapt strategies, and document best practices, ensuring continuous improvement of the model in promoting lasting peace and social harmony.

CONCLUSIONS

THE CORPs MODEL IS THE STRENGTH FOR COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE ON FORB IN YUMBE;

The CORPs Model offers a scalable, community-driven framework for peacebuilding that harnesses local leadership, promotes inclusivity, and fosters social cohesion. Its demonstrated success underscores the

importance of empowering grassroots actors in conflict resolution, making it a vital tool for peace practitioners worldwide. With strategic investments and continuous innovation, the CORPs Model has the potential to significantly contribute to global peace and stability, creating resilient communities where harmony and development flourish.

The CORPs Model in peacebuilding exemplifies the transformative power of community-led initiatives by harnessing the influence and trust of local faith leaders, volunteers, and community members to foster social cohesion and resolve conflicts. By empowering these grassroots peace ambassadors through targeted training and support, the model promotes inclusive dialogue, mutual understanding, and sustainable peace at the local level. This approach not only addresses immediate tensions but also builds resilient communities capable of navigating future challenges. With strategic enhancements such as expanded stakeholder engagement, digital communication, and continuous evaluation, the CORPs Model has the potential to catalyze lasting peace, foster social harmony, and strengthen the fabric of diverse communities worldwide. The CORPs Model makes referrals that have also strengthened national identity, or the affinity one feels toward a nation, can be based on any combination of myriad characteristics that the model has demonstrated, including language, cultural values, shared history, and physical characteristics, just about anything that a group of people feels binds them together and makes them one people in service. The referral network responded to the conflicts between the majority Muslims and the minority Christians in Yumbe Town Council.

The CORPs Model addressed and transformed intra-, inter-, and extra-religious dynamics in Yumbe District, which has promoted FoRB through direct and local partner implementation across divides. It was also observed that while the ingredients of various forms of national identity vary, each CORP had some set of these at his or her core service efforts. Of the many features that can serve as the basis for a national identity at community level, religion is perhaps the most important characteristic that can be attached to nationalism. Nothing else relates so directly to matters of ultimate concern such as justice, salvation, and the afterlife quite the same way religion does at community level. It is no surprise then that religion was used as an engine to reinforce nationalism and national unity in many parts of Yumbe, both historically and in the current community actions by the CORPs.

The CORPs model worked across faith community lines to address religious violence and discrimination despite the religious differences, which can perhaps serve just as easily as a force for division within society even among people who share characteristics such as ethnic composition and language. The CORPs model enabled delivery of FoRB services in the best fit way for the dynamic needs of the communities, which often made them great in a way and caused demand for their identification to stand out.

In the area of inclusion and protection, the CORPs model was drawn from religious leaders and the faith communities were essential actors with strong influence for positive or negative outcomes. Whether drivers of inclusion or exclusion, ensuring support, dialogue and training for these stakeholders in the CORPs model was crucial to enhance the protection of vulnerable individuals, counter hate speech and gender violations. Cultural issues were identified in dimensions that contribute towards these differences in the local cultural setting. These dimensions were categorized in dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, performance orientation, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism and gender equality.

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1. S. Kafeero (2023). "Promoting models of justice and respect for freedom for all." Abstract presented in Johannesburg, South Africa.
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