



# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT *with* RELIGION *and* FAITH *in the* 21ST CENTURY

## Religious Institutions' Response to the Changing Youth Dynamics and Its Impacts on Youth World View

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### INTRODUCTION

The word religion is derived from the Latin word “religare”, where “re” means back and “ligare” means “to the origin.” Thus religion means – going back to our origins. This very meaning unfolds the essentiality of multiple religions. Since the origin and upbringing of different groups of people takes place in different geographies, environments, social situations and other variables, the world witnesses a multiplicity of religions, from major religions to folk religions and totems worship (Dayal, 2018). Going back to the origin can also be seen to have transcendence dimension as the origin of everything is God or a supreme being. Some scholars also believe that the word Religion has evolved from the Latin word, ‘Religo’ which stands for right faith or ritual. Standing for the right faith also has a correlation with creation, as faith is usually directed to God or the supreme being who orders everything into being.

Christianity is the main religion in Kenya. As of 2019, over 85% of the population identified as Christian, among which 33.4 % were Protestant, 20.6% Catholic, 20.4% Evangelical, and seven percent from African Instituted Churches. Furthermore, nearly 11% of Kenyans were Muslim (Faria, 2021). Religion has an overwhelmingly impact on humanity.

Religion ensures hope, fearlessness, tolerance, morality and spiritual development (Dayal, 2018). The focus for this paper is how religious institutions, especially in Kenya, have responded to the changing youth dynamics and how this influences the youth world view.

What unifies religion with other social acts and organizations is the physical/ritualistic and verbal behaviors, the concerns with good or correct action, the desire to achieve certain goals or effects, and the establishment and perpetuation of communities. What distinguishes religion is the object or focus of

these actions, namely, nonhuman and typically “super” human being(s) and/or force(s) with which humans are understood to be in relation— a recognizably “social” relation—that is mutually effective (Eller, 2007). This definition by its very nature indicates that religion has a direct correlation with people and for the interest of this paper the youths. There is however no conclusive answer as to what extent religion has influence on the youths but from experience, religion has been the foundation of so many institutions such as education, politics, science among many others and can therefore not be underestimated when analyzing youth’s world views.

## HOW RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS UNDERSTAND YOUTHS

Past literatures have generally defined youth based on age for instance Kenya’s constitution 2010 defines “youth” as **people who “have attained the age of eighteen years;** but have not attained the age of thirty-five years (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Most Churches see youth as the future of any church like any family would see young people as the continuation of their kind - a description that denies them a fundamental role in the present. While such definitions have been beneficial for academic purposes, it has offered a very narrow perspective in looking at youth in terms of their potential and capabilities. Religious institutions factor age and a reference to a future responsibility in the understanding of the youth. Different presenters during the zoom up symposium on youth engagement also depicted youths with different connotations such as hasty, disorganized, energetic, arrogant, innovative, in constant criticism to traditions among many others. Some of these description may be true but it is not wise to describe the youths just by some single and sometimes very random actions. Either way, the way one is perceived, influences their relationship with the perceiver. One can strongly argue that the perception

of the religious institutions of youth had contributed to the youth breaking away from the Church and therefore standing at a risk in missing out in the rich-religious values and teachings that would affect their world views.

I am of the argument that the youth have to be involved in whatever label that is put on them. The youths must not be viewed narrowly in terms of their age or in reference to a future role, but instead in relation to their values, as well as their social, political, environmental, cultural and religious philosophies. This is to say that the youth’s philosophy of life is shaped by many things such as; environment, culture, society, the Church, and politics. Youths if well perceived, organized and supported are capable of change and much more. Some (Wakiaga 2019) demonstrate how human capital in the youth was a factor that contributed to an economic revolution in East Asia when he asserted that East Asia has always been used as an outstanding example of rapid economic progress into industrialization in what is commonly referred to as The East Asian Miracle. Of the various factors credited for this, the rapid snowballing of human capital, comprised mainly of the youth, was cited as one of the key engines for the Miracle. This translated into an increased life expectancy for 8 countries in East Asia, significant improvement in human welfare and a drastic reduction of poverty. From this example stated above one can deduce that the youths are capable of social transformation based on how religion or the society perceives them.

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF YOUTH CULTURE

Religion plays a very important role in shaping society. All religions have one basic ideology in that they strive to make the society a better place to live. Religion teaches that there is always an ultimate

reward for the good people in the society and also punishment for the bad people. Quite a large number of people in society believe in religion and they practice good ethics (Ivypananda, 2020). However, there is a disconnect in this alliance, as many youths seem to be resisting religious teachings.

Many contemporary people do not make the effort to understand the previously accepted truths of faith since these seem worthless; when juxtaposed to materialism, obsession with numbers, and the expectation of immediate results, faith seem worthless. (Dyczewski, 2015). In most cases youths are the greatest casualties based on their inquisitiveness and quest for quick and immediate satisfaction. One can rightly assert that the presence of God in people's consciousness, the presence of religion and the Church in social consciousness and public space have become an existential and intellectual problem. Even more so the former than the latter. More people live now as if there was no God than those determined to reject God. For many, God still exists, but has "lost" the power to influence their life choices. Religious institutions should be keen on these changing trends in order to find a better framework/strategy in ministering to the youths.

According to the British Social Attitudes survey, more than half of the population say they 'have no religion.' The figures for those who identified as having no religious affiliation have so far peaked at 53% – up from 31% when it was first recorded in 1983 – which leads me to wonder, what role does religion play in young people's lives today (Guardian, 2017). According to Fritz (2018), the landscape of youth culture is changing, but the Church has not adapted to these changes. In fact, in some cases, parishes are implementing approaches to youth formation that haven't been updated in more than four hundred years (Fritz, 2018). The mass exit of the youth can be explained by the way the religious intuitions respond to the changing landscape of youth culture. There seems to be a clear gap in the approach of religious

institutions in the ever-changing youth world. The mass exit of youth has not been experienced in African countries but one can find out that most youth are found in Churches that are located in the slums and that bring another dimension in the understanding of what actually inspires religiosity among the youth population. This can prompt one to hesitantly believe with Karl Marx that religion is the opium for the masses. For instance, he believed that Christian doctrines of obedience to authority, gentility, humility and other related issues were manipulations by the upper class or the bourgeois to keep the masses perpetually subservient. Thus, he believed that religion was an instrument to dominate the masses and therefore opium of the masses. (Omonijo, Uche, Nnedum, & Chine, 2016). I want to argue with the statement quoted in Mark 2:7, "on hearing this Jesus said to them, "it's the sick not the healthy who need a doctor." Either way there needs to be an informed strategy to deal with youth that exists from religion based on the ever changing youths culture (Idakpo, 2019).

## **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS RESPONSE TO YOUTH CHALLENGES**

Most youth view themselves according to the issues affecting them and sometimes the relevance of any institution can be measured on how they deal with issues affecting youth. Today, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16% of the global population. The active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by the target date, and to avert the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and migration (United Nations, 2019). This is a number that one cannot underestimate. The reality is that the youth in their numbers have not actually been put to task both

by the government institutions and the Church institutions. Religious institutions have a role in positively responding to youth challenges as a way to build a positive relationship and to transform society for the better.

Issues that affect the youth and that need a resolute response from religious institutions include, joblessness, *risks of being recruited to terrorism* (Darden, 2019), and *crime* (Muhammad, 2008). One may say that crime in most cases is a response that the youth render to the dysfunctional societies. According to the UN (report), the alternative to a youth dividend is a youth bulge, which is characterized by high youth unemployment and widespread protests—a recipe for political instability. *Pressure of 24 hr networking*: (Griffiths, 2017). *Negative Stereotyping, Lack Education*: (United Nation, 2018) for instance most families in Africa are suffering from the pandemic of poverty so much so that they fail to even educate their kids, let alone supporting their families with basic needs. *Pressure of Materialism*: Materialist world means to study the economic and social life of man and the influence of materialistic things on person's thinking and feelings (Marx's, 1961 an element that has influenced contemporary thinking where one's worth is measured by what one has. Two factors that enhance materialism are when people get any signal from friends, peers, parents and family members and the second factor comes when people feel insecure because of economic fears (Kasser, 2014). Parents and peers are the primary socializing agents which influence this lust among adolescents because they are the emotional and social support for a child and develop their self-esteem (Elsevier, 2010).

According to Gregory (2014), Materialistic trends among youth are increasing day by day, and according to one research the Americans today shop twice as much that of 55 years ago, and they have more luxuries and more money, but still their lust or craving for products is increasing rapidly. The crisis comes in when you lack the capacity to maintain the

materialistic/consumer world and the worst part is nobody is capable because, in a 'matter' dominated world, 'the more you get, the more you seek' so much so that there is no point at which you say, 'enough is enough.' People have stopped focusing on values that lies deep within them which is the only balance with regards to materialistic world views. Other challenges include; *Trauma and Stigma, technology abuse*, technology related issues, challenging environments like the slums, health challenges and death, *substance abuse, identity crisis and low self-esteem and family issues* for instance according to American Journal of Sociology-Family structure, educational attainment, and socioeconomic success: rethinking the "pathology of patriarchy by Biblarz, T.J. and Raftery, A. E. (1999), children from broken families have lower attainments in their academics and future life than children from two-parent families because they have had sustained exposure to their parents' discord.

As the saying goes, a friend in need is a friend indeed. It is the responsibility of the Government and religious institutions to analyze the underlying issues that affect the youth and to support them in coming up with practical solutions to their problems. My understanding is that the preaching is good but it is not sufficient. There is need to develop a practical framework that will resolve the crisis that so many youths go through. Some of the religious institutions have responded to youth challenges in diverse ways but there is still more to be done for a significant change to be registered.

## **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS' APPROACH TO YOUTH FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Youth empowerment has become an important issue that cannot be overlooked by any nation that aspires for development. Much importance is attached to the participation of youths because they serve as a good

force in transforming the national socio-economic order (Idakpo, 2019). Religious influence on youth begins from the families as effective parenting determines the kind of society that will develop when the parented children become adult citizens. Parents lead their children to religion. They are taught good and evil, dos and don'ts, moral ethics, religious beliefs, and so on (Ivypananda, 2020). This formation plays a fundamental role in youth perception of family and religion.

According to Lerner (2005), positive youth development can be characterized by the constructs of the “5 C's”—competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion—leading youth to contribute positively to their communities. according to Idakpo (2019), A principal area that religious education can help empower youth is in the area of character promotion which has become a deepening concern in the society. Young people require personal and social skills to function confidently and competently with themselves, with people and the wider community (Idakpo, 2019). as religion failed in the effective formation of young people? Fritz (2018), insists that lack of effort is not the problem, based on so much effort that the Church has had for the youths but when further to ask that between the millions of dollars that the Church has invested in Catholic secondary education, and the time, talent, and treasure invested in youth ministry, young people get more attention from the Catholic Church than does any other ministry or demographic. Why is there so little return on that investment? More importantly, why is the Church failing to make young disciples

The best summary of youth ministry in the Catholic Church today comes from Pope Francis in his first apostolic exhortation. *Evangelii Gaudium* where he asserts that youth ministry, as traditionally organized, has suffered the impact of social changes. Young people, he states further, often fails to find responses to their concerns, needs and problems and hurts in the usual structures (Pope Francis, 2013). According

to him adults find it hard to listen patiently to them, to appreciate their concerns, demands, and to speak to them in a language they can understand. For the same reason the role of the educators do not produce the expected results.

One of the major challenges for the disconnect between the youths and religion according to Idakpo (2019), is the what has been referred to as the rigidity of the Church that has made the Church ministers not to meet the basic need, which is to focus on building discipleship. The prerogative of religion, as he explains further, is to build youth morality. Moral behavior like honesty, integrity, respect for truth, tolerance for other people's feeling, sexual control and responsible citizenship are essential ingredients for character development. Despite the fact that religious institutions in general have invested so much in youth development, the return to investment is still a riddle to be solved however Idakpo insists that the special abilities and positive behaviors are products of human heart and these qualities according to him cannot be enforces by the force of the arm, in other words, they cannot exist in an individual (youths) without first and foremost existing in their mind and heart. It is worth asserting that there seems to be a clear gap in the approach, content for youth formation and development that the ministers of religion must reconsider in their quest for youth empowerment. The approach ought to be participatory so that the youths can have the feeling and the confidence that they are part of the process.

## **HOW THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS SUPPORT YOUTH INCOME GENERATION?**

According to a United Nation (2019) report on African education, 142 million youth of upper secondary age are out of school. In employment, 71 million young people are unemployed; and millions more are in

precarious or informal work. Disparities within and between countries in education and employment among youth are stark, with gender, poverty, rurality, disability, and migrant/refugee status all being major elements of disadvantage. For instance, about 156 million youth in low- and middle-income countries are working poor International Labor organization (ILO). while almost 30% of the poorest 12- to 14-year olds have never attended school. Education and work must bring money to the youths. The gap lies in the education systems and work environments the do not make an economic difference in the lives of the youth. What has been the performance of the religion in helping the youth to earn and how has that affected religious engagement with the young people?

Joblessness is real but it is not the crisis. Crisis is the conflict between need and lack of ways to meet those needs any youth have needs that border on clothing, travel, fashion, food, social networking among others. Everything that requires money, but without a job, where can one get money? As if to add salt to an injury, many youth, especially in Africa, are made to believe that jobs follow education but in the long run, that is not as easy as the youth were made to believe. It takes money, time and energy to hustle for a job and still not get it. The frustration that comes with it is more than the frustration that results from being stuck because the only thing you believed in to change your future (education and employment) is a failed undertaking. Most religious institutions are not good employers of youths and even in cases where they do, they do not pay them fair wages, thus making them part of the problem when it comes to youth unemployment. Religion must try to make count the efforts of young people and help them to translate the efforts into income that can help them to improve their living standards.

Alexander Chikwanda, Zambia's former finance minister, put it succinctly in an interview: "Youth unemployment is a ticking time bomb," that now appears to be perilously close to exploding. The

analogy draws attention to the consequences of high youth unemployment in a continent where about 10-12 million young people join the labor market each year (Ighobor, 2017). Vogel, 2015 nevertheless suggests that youth unemployment does not have to end in a catastrophe. But if we want to avoid a Generation of Jobless youth, we need to act quickly and implement both short-term solutions for today's youth and long-term solutions to avoid repeating today's crisis (Vogel, 2015). The gap of religion in some cases is utopic, believing that preaching is sufficient to change the lives of the youth. If religious practices and teaching cannot translate into the practical solution to the endless pain of the youth income gap, of what use is it?

According to the United Nations (2018) report, the situation is no better. The report observes that youth employment has worsened in recent years. There are presently 71 million young people unemployed, and many millions more are in precarious or informal work. International labor organization (ILO) estimates that 156 million youth in low- and middle-income countries are living in poverty even though they are employed (United Nation, 2018) and now with Covid-19, the situation is worse than it was in the past two years. Even though Ighobor in 2017 had indicated that young women feel the sting of unemployment even more sharply than young men. The African Development Bank (AfDB) on employment, found that in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa and all of those in North Africa, it is easier for men to get jobs than it is for women, even if they have equivalent skills and experience (Ighobor, 2017), the situation could be worse today for both genders. Even as religious institutions seek practical solutions to the youth's problems in general, a special focus must be put on practical solution in the post covid-19 world and with special attention given to the most vulnerable gender. Even though most religious intuitions have participated in youth income generation, more efforts must be put by the religious institutions in building youth's economic resilience as a way to enhance the relationship.

Ighobor (2017) further observes that unemployment maybe is not the only issues here as even most of the employed suffer from underemployment making situations of the poor even worse. International Labor Organization (ILO) reported in 2016 that up to 70% of African workers were “working poor,” the highest rate globally. The organization added that “the number of poor working youth has increased by as much as 80% for the past 25 years.” This situation could be worse now as many employment institutions were forced to reduce the number of staff as a result of the impact of Covid-19. While the impact of unemployment is grave, it is always good to remain positive and there is nothing in this world that has no solution. For instance, Vogel (2015) asserted that even though there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution for youth unemployment, we need to build a plethora of customized solutions that each addresses one or more of the underlying issues (Vogel, 2015). Africa’s unemployment statistics exclude those in vulnerable employment and those who are under-employed in informal sectors. “Young people [in Africa] find work, but not in places that pay good wages, develop skills or provide a measure of job security,” reports the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think tank (Ighobor, 2017). The government and the religious institution have a role in managing this menace.

## **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS RESPONSE THROUGH PEACEBUILDING**

The so-called “peace sector” in Kenya is booming with many players and approaches, and the challenge for building lasting peace has complex links to Kenya’s dynamic religious communities. A wide range of faith actors and institutions in Kenya have long worked to foster peace and curtail or prevent different threats and forms of violence (World Faith Development Dialogue, 2015). Aquiline (2012), observes that the effort of peacebuilding requires partnership of institutions that bring together all dimensions

of human experience. Integral approaches regard religion as one of the contributing institutions to social integration and harmony. To confirm the argument, a number of believers claim that political organizations cannot ignore the role of religion. Religion plays a central role in attitude and character formation. Working with the youths in the areas of peacebuilding is a way to pacify the youths and also empower them.

Inter-religious conflicts lead to a number of adverse effects. First and foremost is the loss and destruction of life and property. There are times when religious conflict flare out into an all-out violence and results in the loss of lives and destruction of property. The 2016 attack on Garisa University is believed to have been motivated by religious factors. (Moywaywa, 2018). Violence that are religiously instigated usually have youths as the primary actors and these youths since they have been radicalized, they can violently fight in defense to what they believe. Moywaywa further observes that radicalization has, in itself, caused the Kenyan government dearly as it is forced to deal with groups of radicalized youth who are ready to die as they attack certain targets. Some of the incidents associated with religious radicalization include the westgate mall in Nairobi and the 2013/14 attacks on Churches and non-locals in parts of Mandera and Garisa counties. It is important to assert that how the religious institutions respond to peacebuilding shapes youth’s world view in the area of peace and security and how they view others who do not subscribe to their belief system.

According to Aquiline (2012), Many people, especially the youths, have grown skeptical about the role and scope of religious communities in peacebuilding. Young people are aware that most of the destructive conflicts have been fueled by people who profess one faith or the other. In most cases, the religious institutions have simply failed to uphold their prophetic role and in most cases become the center of youth radicalization and shapes youth’s world view

on peace and development. In as much as religion has been the epitome of peace in most communities one cannot deny that the same religion fuel violence through their exclusionist attitude that leads to lack of respect for other faiths and traditions, stifling imagination and limiting people's cultural capacity to respectfully encounter and transcend identity and faith-based prejudice and conflict.

Some of the ways in which Kenya's religious actors have responded to peacebuilding is by building preventive measures, exercising their capacities for peace and using early warning systems to extinguish fires before they start. It is worth noting that despite the youths being in most case the primary actors in violent conflicts, some religious institutions have not been keen in involving the youths in peacebuilding processes. Other strategies that some religious institutions have adopted in Kenya include using their healing and reconciliation strategies and becoming wounded healers the affected using religious teachings. However, in most cases despite the fact that the youths are usually the casualties in most violent conflicts there seems to be no proper framework to rebuild the broken and the wounded youths by most religious institutions. Apart from violent conflicts, the other factor that leave the youths wounded include; economic crisis, heartbreaks, unemployment, identity crisis, addictions, drug abuse and so much more.

Kenya's religious leaders have made efforts to deepen and broaden the understanding and appreciation of diverse faiths." Religious communities by using existing structures and safe spaces have hosted dialogues on diversity, engaging men, women, girls, and boys to appreciate differences and accept the other. the challenge has been on the frequency and the inclusivity especially where youth are involved. Promoting dialogues that focuses on identities is important to help Kenyans discard prejudices and histories that are negative and undermine the human dignity of the other. It is important to promote positive religious identity elements in the face of

division along identity lines and inclusivity especially with key conflict actors like the youths.

## **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS' RESPONSE IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

Spiritual leaders at all levels are critical to the success of the global solidarity for an ethical, moral and spiritual commitment to protect the environment and God's creation. These leaders can become observers, make public commitments, share the story of their commitments and the challenges and joys of keeping them, and invite others to join them. In addition, they can display their sustainable behaviors, serving as role models for their followers and the public (UNEP, 2020).

The protection of the environment is embedded into the teaching of almost all religious institutions. An example of Muslim's reflection on the environment is, "Devote thyself single-mindedly to the Faith, and thus follow the nature designed by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah" (Qur'an 30:30). An example of Christian reflection to the environment is, "The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home." (Pope Francis, 2015). It is imperative for Religious institutions to promote behavior that will ensure a collective responsibility in promoting environmental consciousness and a culture of environmental protection. Religious institutions have done a lot of preaching on how to remain conscious to the environment around youth, however this has not yielded much as the practical action of leading by example has been a mismatch.



Ways in which religious world views form youth understanding of their own place in the world and inform their interactions with it.

According to Donahue & Benson (1995), religion acts as a resiliency, a buffer against negative environmental influences such as poverty and discrimination leading to negative consequences such as depression and delinquency. Since many youths suffer lots of depression, religious intuitions play very positive role in managing youth's depressions. Donahue and Benson further affirms that major religious belief systems contain prohibitions against substance use, promiscuity, violence and stealing which in my view when internalized by the youths, may provide deterrence to the youths who may wish to engage in such risky behaviors even when circumstance pushes them to do so.

Sullivan & Araminin (2019), believe that religion has particularly strong effects on individual-level behavior in communities with high proportion of residents attending religious services regularly, presumably because religion adds legitimacy to community level as well as individual level prohibitions against risky behaviors. In as much as young people may adopt religious beliefs systems because of personal benefits that religion and spirituality offer them, some on no most of the youths have failed to see the benefit of religion in their life and they see prohibitions by the religious institutions as a hindrance to their happiness and exploration. Sullivan & Araminin further suggests that in religious involvement, youth seek a sense of belonging and positive relationship with peers and adults in a religious community and also a connection with God which provide a sense of meaning and purpose. It is therefore imperative for the religious institutions to consider religion and youth development from the lifespan perspective which points to religious socialization; that is, how parents and others transmit religion and how youths construct and internalize it. Religion has the capacity to impact youth development and world view if religious socialization is a considered perspective.

Young people's individual religious choices are a product of their upbringing and of the available religious options. The most important factor, however, is a youth's own spiritual preferences and agency. The youth style of attachment to parents determines how likely they are to follow in their parent's religious footsteps. Securely attached youth are likely to adopt the faith (or lack of faith) of their parents. Insecurely attached youth are likely to distance themselves from their parents either by ceasing religious attendance or by joining a different religious organization and seeking attachment and family there (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Youth also change their pattern of religious involvement because of peer invitation or to avoid cliques, but peers do not have a strong influence on youths' deeply held spiritual beliefs. When motivated to change religious affiliation, youth generally switch to as similar of organizations as they can find that have the desired characteristics that were missing from the one they left.

The potential exists for youth spiritual and religious development to take a non-traditional trajectory toward a new religious movement. The potential for youth to become involved in cults is a legitimate cause for concern. However, the word "cult" as it is used conventionally encompasses both dangerous cults, which use deceptive recruiting practices, mind control and threaten proselytes with harm should they leave. There are also new religious movements (NRM's), which have beliefs that are at variance with mainstream religions, but are otherwise benign

Religion acts as a key social bond inhibiting criminal behaviors. Several studies dealing with samples of emerging adults support this idea and suggest religion as a social bond relevant for emerging adults. Theories, such as social control theory and the age-graded theory of social control, may want to add additional focus on religion as a social bond that offers a strong attachment to conventional society and may be useful in preventing offending during emerging adulthood and influencing desistance for those offending during this stage of the life course (Salvatore & Robin, 2018)

The ultimate responsibility of peacebuilding requires a holistic framework of reflection considering the current trends of violence in Africa. Such a situation links the process of peacebuilding to critical issues such as human rights, social justice, shared security, gender equality, economic empowerment and local capacities of self-organization. The claim that religion cherishes public values more strongly than any other institution, makes it a credible partner in the process of social reconciliation and peacebuilding (Aquiline, 2012)

In addition to respecting and encouraging a young person's own spiritual agency, concerned adults must also guard youths' religious and spiritual boundaries outside of the family. Christian "parents' rights" activists pressure schools to withhold important sexuality and reproductive health information from youth, and schools are fully justified in upholding a youth's own right to accurate information. Parents rights groups should also lobby for school's efforts to specifically address problems of victimization and harassment based on perceived sexual orientation. Schools are justified in resisting these efforts as well, upholding their responsibility to keep all youth safe and health.

Too often, religion in the lives of youth is ignored as of marginal importance, or becomes a means by which adults carry out their agendas for youth. Rather than specifying a role for youth in adult politics and institutions that is not necessarily in the youths' best interests, a youth development perspective on religious

and spiritual development calls for concerned adults to respect young people's own agenda. Ultimately, the religious institutions that grow will be those that relevant to, attentive to the needs of, and a worthy investment for youth.

## CONCLUSION

Like other institutions that surround the lives of the youths, religious institutions have a fundamental role in shaping positively the youth's world views through their teaching, preaching, instructions, through supporting youth's education, employment and income generation, through involving the youths in social transformation and through rebuilding the broken and the wounded youths. Despite the fact that the religious institutions have played a significant role in youth's transformation, there is still a significant gap in the perception and general response by the religious institution to the ever-changing youth's dynamics that may compromise on the youth's world views and the role of religious institutions in shaping it for the better. Such gaps in the engagements with the youths have the capacity to shake the youth's bond with religion and risk creating youth whose world views take no notice of rich-religious values, teachings and practices. The religious institutions must undergo a revolution in their approaches to youth in order that they may be able to inspire and rebuild new trust with the youth and contribute to reshaping the youth's world views for the better.

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