

Background:

The Central African Republic's civil unrest has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Although the civil war ended in 2011 with a ceasefire and a peace accord, unfortunately many regions outside of the capital are still controlled by rebel groupings. This conflict is deeply rooted in religious tension between the Muslim and Christian communities. The civil unrest has led to the establishment of Muslim and Christian militias slaughtering, raping, and torturing people who do not share their religious beliefs. Thousands of Muslims have fled from their homes in fear of being slaughtered by the Christian militias. Likewise, the Muslim militias wage waves of attacks on the Christian community; these militias have effectuated continuous violence against one another. Little has been done to reconcile those religions to promote peace, social cohesion, and tolerance. Although Bangui is relatively safer than other parts of the country, Christians and Muslims are still reluctant to form a community. Today, the presence of the United Nations force known as MINUSCA and the Russian peacekeeping mission contribute significantly to maintaining peace in the capital, even though many areas outside Bangui are scenes of interfaith violence.

Rationale:

We aspire to provide an avenue that will help bring an end to the conflict that has been entrenched between the Muslims and Christians of Bangui. We will work with the youth population from both communities by offering peacebuilding activities to foster healthy relationships between members of different religions to enhance social cohesion. We plan to do this by hosting a restorative justice forum, workshops, and training with an emphasis on peace, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Our project targets 50 young people between the ages of 15-25 from the Muslim and Christian religions. The forum's activities are tailored to inspire participants to lead meaningful and proactive peacebuilding activities at community-based levels in the pursuit of building resilience for peace, tolerance, and unity.

Project Activities:

- a) We will host a restorative justice forum where the participants will be trained in understanding basic restorative justice practices through community dialogue and mediation.
- b) We will conduct workshops to give participants basic conflict resolution, leadership development, and critical thinking skills, with an emphasis on entrepreneurial leadership.
- c) We will invite prominent religious leaders to promote peace and reconciliation through dialogue.
- d) Finally, we are currently making arrangements for a television and a radio appearance on the largest television network in the country, Television Centrafricaine, with a radio appearance on Radio Centrafrique and the United Nations sponsored station, Radio Ndeke Luka. Our partner organizations in Bangui have already reached out to local media organizations to secure this programming. We will propagate messages of peace and foster unity. We will also invite participants who are war victims to share their experiences and inspire others about the negative effect of war, in a hope of using storytelling for social impact.

Project description and Implementation:

We will be located in the USA carrying out our project virtually via Zoom; our project is designed for three weeks in Bangui. We will partner with L'Observatoire Centrafricain des Élections et de la Démocratie (OCED) and Wa Zin a Nga Zo. The project will focus on youth between the ages of 15-25

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and participants will be recruited by our partnering organizations. Those institutions will be responsible for the vetting process with a special focus on gender inclusivity and persons with disabilities and ensure the organization of activities at local levels. Our project will run for three weeks, from June 7 to June 28. Below is a detailed description:

Week	Topic	Activity
1 (June 7-13)	Security and peacebuilding. Entrepreneurial Leadership. Conflict analysis and mediation.	Restorative Justice Forum, Who is the Artist, Story Around the Circle
2 (June 14-20)	Solving problems through business ideas. I am peace: Conflict prevention, and peace. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.	Marshmallow Challenge, Broken Telephone, Words Challenge
3 (June 21-28)	Youth peace and security. Conflict mapping analysis. The potential causes of conflict and war.	Pitching/Project Presentation and Radio/Television appearance

Expected Outcome & Sustainability:

We aim to restore and renew social bonds between Christians and Muslims. Our activities will bring people of different ethnic groups, religions, and genders together to collaborate in appreciation of diversity and the value of community. We predict that our peacebuilding and leadership activities will encourage participants to be agents of peace in their community. Therefore, we will provide the participants with basic entrepreneurship and peacebuilding skills for continuous education to enhance social cohesion between Christians and Muslims in the Central African Republic. After the project, we will connect participants with professional mentors from our partnering organization to provide guidance on personal development. Supervision from our partners and creation of an online platform for shared experiences and storytelling will help participants (or the program to) adopt proactive methods and improve outcomes. We will also have a weekly radio program after the event that will be broadcast for four weeks. This will involve the heads of the Muslim and Christian communities who will deliver messages for peace to enhance the fostering of peace across the country.

About Us:

Mohammed Bah is a Liberian majoring in International Relations with a concentration in Policy, Politics, and Development. He is a Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI) Fellow of 2018, a U.S. Department of State flagship program introduced by former President Barrack Obama. He is the Co-founder of the Moijama Educational Foundation and he has a background in civil society advocacy, project management, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Miguel Yakouma is a Biomedical Engineering student from the Central African Republic who is strongly passionate about entrepreneurship and leadership. He graduated from the African Leadership Academy in 2019. He organized a leadership and entrepreneurship camp in his country for the first time in 2017. Both of them have been affected by a civil war in their home countries, and the experience has enhanced their effort and cultivated their background to carry on this project.