



Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism WhatsApp Workshop Seminar

Series 4

Conversation with Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria

He For She

The Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism - Africa (CVPP) is a non-profit network that builds the capacities of women and other groups in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict through a Peace and Pluralism approach. CVPP- Africa equips women to contribute to peace processes in decision making roles.

Convener: Alice Wairimu Nderitu, mediator of armed conflict and author

Moderator: Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Head of the Research, Policy and Planning at the Department of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission

Coordinator: Regina Mutiru, Mentor and Founding Partner at Amani Women Network

Panelist: Salim Musa Umar, National Publicity Secretary and member of the National Executive Council of MACBAN (Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria)

Rapporteur: Shama Shah, conflict analyst

Participants: Members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism Africa

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This Seminar Series is available through the Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism website, <https://peaceandpluralism.org/>. The publication of this Series was made possible through the voluntary work of members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya; Convener's introduction of the workshop seminar: Hi everyone and welcome to Seminar Series 4: A conversation with Salim Musa Umar of Nigeria moderated by Dr. Sella Nasimiyyu of Kenya. This is a workshop so as usual we shall ensure not to send in any messages until the conversation is officially ended by our moderator.

Our rules of response are guided by the following considerations:

Before we speak or respond we ask ourselves, *Is it kind? Is it necessary? Is it true?*

So we have three men on this platform of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism of more than 100. In consideration that quite a number of men are not known to be pro women's agenda it's important to understand why those who support us do.

Salim Musa Umar of Nigeria has been an ally of women for long. He will tell us what motivated him to not only be here but to be one of the founders of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism. He will tell us what it feels like to be part of our conversations, the challenges he sees for women and also share his own personal story as a peacebuilder. We have learnt not to take the three men here for granted considering for instance that in Kenya we actually have a registered Organization called "Men Against Women Empowerment"

Our moderator is the great Dr. Sella Nasimiyyu.

I now hand over to Regina to introduce the presenter and moderator.

Regina Mutiru, Kenya: Hi everyone.

Our moderator today is Dr. Sella King'oro whom many call 'Stella' (**Bio at the end of the script**), and our presenter today as mentioned by Alice is Salihu Musa Umar (**Bio at the end of the script**).

Doreen Nkala, Zimbabwe: Welcome.

Dr. Sella Nasimiyyu King'oro, Kenya: Have you ever wondered how the 'He for She' movement began? Ever thought why men decide to support Women's Agenda? Maybe what they

do and how they feel when they do so? Today, Mr. Salim Salihu Musa Umar has graciously agreed to share his experience in supporting the women's agenda. He will tell us how he ended up in a women's WhatsApp group and why he became an ardent He for She agent... Karibu Salim.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Thank you Dr. Sellah and good afternoon to you all from this side of the globe.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: Good afternoon Salim. We look forward to hearing and interacting with your experience.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Thank you once again. I think I would rather wait for the questions to start rolling in. But let me say whoever coined the "He for She" deserves commendation. In fact, the present Nigeria's Minister for Women Affairs call me He for She!

Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe: My question Salim, is how have you managed the challenge of male counterparts assuming gender issue means women issues and they dismiss them. Sometimes even attendance. I ask because we still struggle.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Dr. Parachi]: Once you are able to understand the inevitability of clash of interest and you remain focused on the reality, it becomes easier. Some of our male counterparts tend to look the other way when it comes to gender issues (often mistaken for women issues) due to some cultural and religious connotations. But the reality is different. 1. Are you going to remain fixated on certain beliefs about women that doesn't add value or you key in and contribute to enable the woman achieve her maximum potential in a demanding society. I choose to identify fully with the women causes because of some of my personal experiences and 2. I don't subscribe to the idea of relegating the best of God's creatures to the background because that is not what God wanted in the first place. So their (males) challenges instead of discouraging are serving as my motivational materials.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: I think let's start from the beginning... What led you to peacebuilding since from your bio you used to work for a profit company... What made you change the direction?

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro]: Thank you for this question. It is important to have a small background on how I started. I started working for peace in 2001 immediately after the infamous Jos crisis. The pastoralists communities were worst affected then. Massive displacement and lost in sources of livelihood.

The need to reconcile the warring communities (Farmers and Herders in this context) necessitated the initiation of dialogues among the communities by Government and many NGO's. I was the Secretary(Plateau State Council) of the biggest pastoralists association in Nigeria then (MACBAN), so my involvement becomes natural.

However, the turning point was when my house was attacked and I lost seven of my brothers in one single swoop.

I was boiling with anger and plotting for revenge. I lived with that trauma for two years planning how to avenge the death of my brothers. It was taking its toll on me psychologically and the strains were showing in me. One day, my father who is now 84 years call me into his inner room and asked what the problem was. I was doing 'Tom and Jerry' with the answer. He realised, and rightly too that I was up to something sinister. He immediately reminded me as a father he has forgiven those that killed our brothers and I should equally leave vengeance for God Almighty. He cited so many verses of the Holy Quran to convince me. I left his room reminiscenceing over our conversation. I couldn't sleep that night!

The next day, I made this solemn vow and declaration; Oh God Almighty, nothing happens without Your knowledge, you knew why you allowed my brothers to be killed in the manner they were killed, you taught us forgiveness so that you can forgive us too. I leave vengeance for You, I therefore leave the issue of avenging the killing of my brothers to You. Since then, I had the peace that I desire, I have absolute peace of mind. I always sleep like a baby.

So, I dedicated my whole life including resigning from my position as a Customer Service Manager in a foremost multinational company and concentrated on peace building. I won't pray for my worst enemy to go through what I went through in life.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: Wow. Quite a journey. You even resigned! That's a demonstration of a determined person.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro]: Yes, it was tough combining the two. You know profit making organizations are time consuming and here is Salim on the hot seat of mediating armed conflict (it is truly armed conflict to the best of my understanding).

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: So, when did you first encounter working with and for women's agenda? What inspired you to join this he for she trail?

Pauline Gikang'ah, Kenya: Wow. Thank you for sharing.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: I am just following all this with fascination. One of us here, Mama Stella leads the African Unions work on masculinities.

Christine Mutimura-Wekesa, Tanzania: Bless your Father Salim, and you too for finding the heart to forgive!!

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro]: I started precisely in September, 7th 2001 because of the crisis in Jos. Hmm... I think it comes naturally

considering my experience during the infamous Jos crisis. I was part of the team tasked by the community to ensure that the pastoralists women and children were evacuated to a safe place. We identified a relatively hidden area in an old mining camp. While evacuating, I saw how women and children were helpless. One fell into a mining pond with a baby strapped on her back. I couldn't withstand the wailings. I dived into the pond and to the glory of God, I saved her and the baby. Since then, I always see that woman in every woman in distress.

Beyond that, I don't believe in competing with women, no basis for the competition as women are among the best of creatures created by God Almighty to help shape humanity to its finest form. Women only need to understand this and play their roles without giving in to some cultural dogmas that tend to degrade their exalted position.

2. Women are more placed to mould the society positively considering the emotional attachment between a mother and her baby. For men, it is more coercive and quite often with minimal results. Women therefore are strategically placed to shape and mould humanity in a way that benefits all.

3. I served as an Advisor for an International NGO working in Nigeria between 2016 to 2019. I worked closely with Women groups in Plateau and Kaduna States where we fashion out what is known as the women declaration in the promotion of peace in the communities. At a point in time, I was heading the women cluster. This gave me comparative advantage where I worked closely with women thereby increasing my understanding and deepening my perspective on women.

4. Women have more resilience than men, thus, more prone to withstanding the pressures of building a cohesive family and the society in the long run.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Christine Mutimura-Wekesa]: Thank you very much. It may interest you to know I was with him this morning in the village. I took the small opening of the lockdown to go and greet him.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: Oh my... You dived after the mother with baby in the pond! This tells me that it's our decisiveness to make a change that matters, not the lack of money or technical assistance! Thank you for sharing this.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: And the baby I dived to save is now a 21 year old young man! He is presently in Bauchi State.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: I am sure he will never forget. He is the real 'peace dividend'.

Have you had any challenges that may be attributed to you (as a man) working for women empowerment?

Pauline Gikang'ah, Kenya: Amazing.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: I encourage everyone to ask Salim questions...

Fatima Maiga, Mali: Salim, thank you so much for your testimony and dedication. I am seeing a lot of radicalization in my part of Africa, especially among young men when it comes to "the place", status of women. My question is, how do we change the mindsets and behavior of the vast majority of our African men vis à vis gender roles and the status of women? Especially the young men? Please take the time to respond from both your personal and professional perspectives.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro]: Yes. I was once in charge of women dialogues in Kaduna state and it entails a lot of visits to the communities. In most of the communities visited you first of all have to pay homage to the traditional ruler to brief him and get his buy-in. In some instances, I was dismissed as a not very serious human being anchoring issues that have to do with women. Those of you that are familiar with our rich culture of traditional rulers/institutions here (Nigeria) will understand this easily. But I persevered, kept insisting on what I believed is noble. I wasn't deterred and at the end of it all they were able to support my work and we ended with the best peace declaration in the areas.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: My, my... Your story continues to tell us that persistence and determination are key to achieving our goals. And that culture will change if it finds agents. Your sharing teaches us not to tire as peace agents.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Fatima Maiga]: Fatima, it boils down to walking the talk on what you believed in. Radicalization would surely ease out with massive investment in education, awareness campaign etc. The younger generation if left unchecked, are likely going to join any group especially those whom trajectory is tilting toward religious beliefs. So it is important to invest on the youth for them to be productive and contribute meaningfully. It is no easy task I guess.

Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada: Thank you so much for sharing this powerful story, Salim.

I wonder: Who do you find has the most influence over the mindsets of other men? Is it religious leaders? Elders? Chiefs? Sports figures? Musicians? Military leaders? Politicians?

I'm asking because I'm trying to think of who we can target to speak positively about the importance of women being involved in peace and security that will have the most impact on communities. Who can be most influential in helping societies re-define what it means to be a strong man? Sometimes it feels like we are going man to man to man to convince people!

Mary Lilly Driciru, Uganda: Thank you Salim for the wonderful sharing. What would like to see a woman do in order to emerge successful in the event of empowerment? Or what mistakes should women avoid in pursuit of peace?

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Jacqueline O'Neill]: This is quite challenging considering the circumstances. But in all honesty it depends on the communities/the context and the circumstances. In most communities, they listen more to the traditional institutions than the politicians. Yes, it is tilting most often from male dominated area (I mean in terms of looking for support) but identifying key persons with cloud in the community is important. Let me give an example; when I started working with women and they begin to discuss mainly issues that bothered them like how they were raped, dehumanized during attacks (sometimes by security forces sent to help them out) etc., I was the only male in the hall. You can only imagine how traumatizing it was for me listening to them. So, instead of chickening out, I resolved and rededicated my commitment to work with women and help them stand on their feet. So it completely changed my perspective about women and I have to take more firmer dimension to get involved.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti: Thank you Salim, it is absolutely fascinating to read your journey to find peace and as well to work with and for women!

My question would be quite simple, how can we change men's perspectives about women's abilities especially in the working sphere, without negating our traditions and religious beliefs (for ourselves).

Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada: Thanks for being resolved and rededicated, not just being scared and stepping away.

Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe: Following...

Fatima Maiga, Mali: Excellent response Salim. We need to invest. Investment is key, yet we do not do it in the scale needed and in a culturally appropriate manner. I hope to work with you one day in a multi-country campaign on this issue.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: Quite revealing and insightful. So about the last question, how do you feel being one in only three men on this platform? About the interactions and the knowledge we share here.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Hibaa Ismael]: It boils down to understanding the religious and cultural connotations and putting them into their right perspective. Believe some of this obnoxious beliefs doesn't have roots in the real religious perspective. Men tend to amplify them to suit their personal peculiarities. But, let us know that change is difficult to embrace. We that believed in changing the narratives have to be strong -willed and pursue this cause with every arsenal at our disposal. It is not going to be easy, but surely it is doable.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Fatima Maiga]: Thank you. It is important sharing experiences.

Ladi Agyer Madaki, Nigeria: I have been following.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro]: I feel great and honoured. It is always a feeling of fulfilment doing what you believed in. In some communities they call me 'Hajiya Salim' which literally means a woman. It is ok. Keep doing what you believed in.

Pauline Gikang'ah, Kenya: Wow, thank you.

Christine Mutimura-Wekesa, Tanzania: Thanks for sharing your experiences with us but mostly for letting your humanity lead the way. We need more allies in amplifying women's voices and having you here share this platform with us is better than having no men at all.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Thank you. I want to place on record the positive contributions of my sisters here in Nigeria. They have been supporting me consistently in all I do regarding the women cluster. Justice Ladi Madaki, Fatima Suleiman, Monica Tete, Zainab Yakubu, Hajiya Mairo, Halima Umar and host of others. You deserve special mention here. I thank you all.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: What is usually the outcome of your work with women at the community level?

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: This great women were identified by our own Alice Nderitu whom we call Kenya's gift to humanity during her many contributions in Nigeria.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Alice Nderitu]: I feel highly great to see women I have worked with taking their own destinies into their hands. The women are now in charge of mediation between farmers and herders (pastoralists), between Christians and Muslims in various communities. I personally feel fulfilled.

Also note that the women are now our focused on the next phase of our engagements. We want to develop their capacity to be able to train other women at the village level in mediating, conflict mitigation and community relations in a pluralistic society.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: I am advised we need to stop now as those on Kenya/Uganda/ Tanzania/ Ethiopia time are already breaking the fast.

Many thanks Shama for as always silently observing and taking notes. Thanks Regina for the introductions. Sella for skillfully moderating in a very conversational manner that made us feel as if we were talking to Salim in person.

Salim we can only say thank you, both for your input today, we have learnt a lot and for the work you continue to do for women. We need to properly document some of this work as your work could become a great case study.

Many thanks everyone and blessings - see you all next week - same time, same place - Insha'Allah!

And I forgot to thank all the rest of us for contributing and listening. Mea Culpa and many thanks

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria [Responding to Alice Nderitu]: Thank you very much for your service to humanity.

I thank you all for your contributions.

Na gode.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: Thank you too Salim for your service to community! Na gode sosai! The 4th Workshop officially ended with thanks and appreciation for the day's panelist, Salim Musa Umar.

Biographies



Salihu Musa Umar (Salim)

Salihu Musa Umar popularly known as Salim is a project manager, conflict and policy analyst. He is a National Publicity Secretary and a member of the National Executive Council of MACBAN (Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria). MACBAN is one of the biggest pastoralists' associations in Africa. As part of his duties, he manages projects on nomadic education and peaceful resolution of farmer-herder conflicts on behalf of the Farmers and

Herders Initiative for Peace and Development (FHIPD). Salim is a Fellow of the Civilian Institute of Democratic Administration, Tema, Ghana and a Member of the Public Administration Institute of Nigeria. Salim is 2019 alumni of the International Human Rights Training Programme – Equitas, Abbott College, Montreal, Canada.

Salim has served as Special Assistant to the Executive Governor of Plateau State on Special Duties, advising on peaceful resolution of farmer-herder conflicts. He further served as a Senior Special Assistant to another Governor in the same State, working as a Community Relations Advisor. In 2007, he served as a member of the Presidential Committee set up to resolve the lingering crisis between herders and farmers in Nigeria. Salim has served in several Government Boards and Parastatals including as a member of Plateau State Pilgrims Welfare Board.

Salim served as Chairman of the Fulani Peace Committee, set up by the Government of Plateau State in 2015 to establish peace between the Berom (farmers) and Fulani (herders) who are the key protagonists in Plateau State Nigeria. It was while working in this capacity that an International Organization, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) approached Salim to lead the Fulani people as the head of delegation to meet in a dialogue with other ethnic communities in Jos. Salim chaired and was the lead negotiator for the Fulani community. The dialogue led to the Declaration of Commitment to Peace and Cooperation of the Inter-Communal Dialogues and Conflict mediation in Jos, Plateau State.

He later worked as an advisor, conflict and policy analyst and was instrumental in guiding the organization towards two more agreements The Kafanchan Declaration of Kaduna and the Southern Plateau Inter-Communal Peace Dialogue.

Prior to working with Government, Salim worked in a multi-national corporation for twelve years, leaving as Customer Service Manager, travelling all over Nigeria, garnering knowledge about people and their lifestyles that he now puts to use in creating peaceful co-existence programs. Salim studied Local Government Studies at Kaduna Polytechnic and holds an M.A in Public Administration from Nasarawa State University, Keffi. He is currently studying for a Ph.D in the same field from the same University.

Salim is a very passionate conflict and policy analyst and peace advocate and community leader who enjoys a robust relationship and respect from farmers and pastoralists alike in his country Nigeria and in East, North and West Africa. Salim was, in 2019, member of the Directorate of Field Operations in the Presidential Campaign Council, tasked to ensure a violent conflict free Presidential Election for the whole of Nigeria.



Dr. Sellah King'oro (Stella)

Dr. Sellah King'oro is a researcher of over fourteen years' experience in peace, social cohesion, social justice and social policy research. Currently, she is the Head of the Research, Policy and Planning Department of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission where she has worked for over seven years. Prior to her appointment at NCIC, she was a Researcher at Development Policy Management Forum, a Programme Officer at Peace and Development Network and a Chairperson of the Conflict Analysis Group at the National Steering Committee of Peace Building and Conflict Management in the office of the president.

Dr. King'oro holds a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies from Kisii University, a Master in International Studies from the University of Nairobi, a Bachelor of Education Arts from Maseno University, a Bachelor of Laws from Mount Kenya University and two post graduate diplomas from Bradford University, UK and Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

Dr. King'oro is a Rotary Peace Fellow and a Chevening Fellow. She was appointed as the Global Peace Index ambassador in 2015 by the Institute for Economics and Peace, USA following her effort in leading the development of the 2013 social cohesion index for Kenya. She is also the president of Rotary District 9212 Alumni Association which covers Kenya, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

She is a Board member of Namang'ofulo Secondary School, a public school located in rural Kenya and the Open Learning Exchange (OLE), a United States international organization that is committed to ensuring that everyone, especially girls, get access to high quality basic education. She has published several peer reviewed articles on peace, governance and democracy and has presented unpublished papers in a number of international and national conferences.