



Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism WhatsApp Workshop Seminar

Series 10

Conversation with Dr. Fulata Moyo (Malawi), Hibaa Ismael (Djibouti) and Chief Sarah Lochodo (Kenya)

Ethnic Identities: Implications on Peace, Security & Pluralism in Africa

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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.

The WhatsApp Workshop Seminar Series began in the wake of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic has hit the world's vulnerable and most marginalized hardest. These are the people members of CVPP work with. Members of CVPP decided to meet this unprecedented challenge by speaking to each other every week. Sharing stories, learning new skills from each other all through the WhatsApp platform, to enable reach to those of our members without access to facilities such as Zoom or Skype.

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

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

Moderator: Kijala Shako, Head of Advocacy, Campaigns, Communications and Media for Save the Children, East and Southern Africa

Panelist 1: Dr. Fulata Moyo, World Council of Churches' programme executive for the project on A Just Community of Women and Men

Panelist 2: Hibaa Ismael, Third counsellor in charge of Multilateral Affairs and Deputy Permanent Representative of UNEP and UN-Habitat

Panelist 3: Chief Sarah Lochodo, Area Chief of Turkana, Kenya

Rapporteur: Shama Shah, conflict analyst

Participants: Members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism Africa

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Alice Nderitu, Kenya; Convener's introduction of the workshop seminar: Hi everyone, welcome to this week's Seminar Series No 10!

1. The Moderator of today's Seminar Series, Kijala Shako came up with the great title of this series: *Ethnic Identities: Implications on Peace, Security and Pluralism in Africa*.
2. Pluralism is the existence of different types of people who have different beliefs and opinions, within the same society; and the belief that the existence of different types of people within the same society is a good thing.
3. The session panelists present different ethnic perspectives. The moderator Kijala Shako is herself from an ethnic minority, who has worked to become a leading Pan Africanist lawyer.
4. Many of those who come from ethnic majorities like me, sometimes dismiss claims of marginalized ethnic minorities. We do need to face our privileges though. I worked with a colleague who often went through shortlisted candidates for government jobs in newspapers, hardly ever finding any from his community. Checking shortlisted candidates to see whether my ethnic community has been included is not something I would ever think of doing, because it is given that my community will always be included in that kind of list. We don't have to worry that our languages will become extinct, or someone from a majority ethnic community will insist on representing us in parliament in our own land and get elected by her/his own people.
5. The post-colonial government of my country Kenya implemented policies such as Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 that ensured development was concentrated in the so called high potential areas, sometimes with deliberate effort to suit ethnic and other vested political interests. This means that though people from my ethnic community may be extremely poor (as many are) they did benefit from good schools and in many cases good infrastructure, producing the first-degree holders in the country etc.
6. I also apologize that two of our panelists Shamsia (particularly important as she is Nubian, a community that was for a long time stateless in Kenya) and Fatimata from

Mauritania (very important perspective of a marginalized majority) will not be presenting. Fatimata unfortunately lost her uncle and Shamsia is dealing with a family emergency.

Fatimata we are so sorry on the loss of your uncle. We shall miss the perspectives of Shamsia and Fatimata and hope they can share them later.

Today, let us listen to ethnic minorities and really hear them. I now hand over to Shama.

Shama Shah, Kenya: Thank you, Alice.

Hi everyone!

Today we're going to listen to a few members of the marginalized minority. We also have a participant who's half from the marginalized community, and half from the majority.

Our presenters today are - Hibaa Ismael (half marginalized minority and half majority, Djibouti), Chief Sarah Lochodo (marginalized minority, Turkana) and Dr. Fulata Moyo (marginalized minority, Malawi).

This is a complex yet important issue to address and I thank the volunteers who will be opening up to us!

As always, our rules stand firm; *Before we speak or respond, we ask ourselves; is it kind? Is it necessary? Is it true?*

With this, I hand over to our able moderator, Kijala.

Welcome Kijala. The floor is yours

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Thank you Alice. Thank you Shama.

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to you all wherever you are. Welcome all to today's workshop on an issue that is both historical and also topical. The issue of Ethnic Identities and the Implications on Peace, Security and Pluralism in Africa.

As a minority myself, through reflections and conversations in the run up to this seminar, I have held up a mirror to myself, forcing a lot of meditations. I will share these as we proceed.

Our panelists will assist us reflect on issues have already been introduced. This is an esteemed panel of Ladies who are 'Firsts' in very many ways in their Communities and Countries. They have chosen to bare their souls to us today. May we be gracious in return. Kindly forward your questions and comments to me and we will take them after all presentations.

So without further delay, allow me to welcome Dr Fulata Moyo our first presenter.

Dr. Fulata Moyo, Malawi: Hi, everyone. My name is Fulata Moyo, I am from Malawi. As you remember, Malawi has just gone through very exciting presidential elections, and the beauty of it is that most of us are now very excited and really looking forward to a change. Why? Because the previous government really operated on high levels of regionalism and ethnic prioritization, in that, if you came from the ethnic group that the president came from, you had all the chances to get into the great positions and you had other privileges; if you came from the region where he came from, you were good to go. But I come from the Northern part of the country. The first government after independence in the Northern region was not really the priority or the agenda for the then government, and it has never been the priority agenda of the governments since that time.

I am Ngoni, the 4th largest group of the 14 major ethnic groups in Malawi. The Ngoni originally came from South Africa. They migrated from South Africa between 1813 and 1814, and settled in Malawi, in the Northern and Central regions. I come from the Northern region. So, we are actually a minority in that way. But my story is even more complicated in that, my great grandfather actually was Chief Songea, one of the leaders of the Maji Maji struggle in Tanzania (don't ask me why we are not from Tanzania, that you should ask my ancestors!). But anyway, as you know, we always say Africa was one continent and these divisions were done by the Europeans who wanted to cut Africa to pieces. So, Tanzania, Malawi and other parts (probably) you know, flow into each other's ethnic groups and all that.

I came from Northern Malawi, and I want to share one story, and then I want us to reflect on some of the aspects of it. I was born in a family of 10 children. My father had five wives. So, the 10 children were from all the five wives. From my mother, who was the third wife, we were six of us; she actually had a bigger share of children. I was the last, a girl, who grew up like a tomboy (that's for another day's discussion). Growing up in that way in northern Malawi, in the little town called Embangweni, I found myself in primary school where no one went to high school from that school.

I had to repeat 3 times in that school before even thinking of going to high school, but even after those 3 times, I was not selected to go to high school. So, I had to go to the Central region to boarding school and with my name slightly changed, so that it sounded like I came from the Central region. I enrolled in this boarding school for a year and voila! I got selected to go to high school. I was selected to go to a very good boarding school run by the Catholic church. I studied there for 4 years. The 4th year, which was the final year where you decide to go to university or not, I was actually offered an opportunity to go to study at another very 'elevated' high school which was developed by the then President (Kamuzu Banda). It was modelled after Eton, the school in the UK. I was supposed to go there for Form 5 and 6 and then travel abroad to study. But coming from Northern Malawi and being Ngoni, I knew it would be a very bad choice to go to a school run by the president and his people because in the first place as Ngoni, I grew up with this sensitization that we were not really accepted by the ruling party especially as at the time our heroes were being murdered, etc. With that sensitivity I knew if I went to this school, I would actually be putting my life in danger. So, I refused to go to this school. Instead, I chose to

go to University in Southern Malawi. I finished studying there and went to teach in high school for a year. I then went abroad for Masters and came back to work as a junior lecturer at the University of Malawi, teaching Theology and Gender Studies. After that I studied for a PhD and came straight to Geneva to work with the World Council of Churches, responsible for Women and Gender. I studied a lot of conflict resolution, healing of memories and also trauma healing, etc. I was a visiting scholar at Harvard and Yale University and other places. I want now to move on to the challenges of being a Ngoni woman, and the issues that it raises.

As a Ngoni woman growing up, we grew up with this historical pride as warriors because we gained a lot of land by conquering and occupying (which is a really shameful story, really), but this pride, we carried it with ourselves. Culturally, we had all these ethics to follow, such as the ethics of discipline, obedience and of course being very patriarchal. Our ethics meant that women were supposed to belong to men and there was the practice of 'bride price' which was sometimes misunderstood by abusive men as they thought they own the woman and that they could treat the woman anyhow they wanted. Yet, the women had their own hidden transcripts of resistance and affirming their power, and they had many ways of doing that. That meant that most of the time, men had to be very careful.

The decision-making process the Chief's leading us meant they had advisors, and some of them were women, and this meant that women also participated in decision making (but probably not at the high table under the big tree ruling compound). The women had to be consulted for every decision that would impact the community. What the challenge was, was the fact that growing up in a context where orality was more prominent than written records, it meant that most of the time we passed on our stories by word of mouth and most of the time we didn't know the stories of other ethnic groups. What we knew about them was based on bias, ignorance as well as fear – much more than the real truth of those ethnic groups. And unless you travelled outside your village, you didn't encounter these ethnic groups.

So, for me, it was when I went to the boarding school that I had real access of other ethnic groups. I learnt a lot, and some of the things I learnt actually went against some of the biases that I grew up with. That was very important, because otherwise the biased information that we grew up with meant that you had this pride that you were a better ethnic group and that you had better practices than others. I learnt that actually, the Chewa people were practicing a matriarchal family system, where if there was a marriage, it was the man who moved to the wife's village (not like us where the woman moved to the man's village). For me, when I learnt about this, I wanted to know more about the Chewa practice of the matriarchal system, and I wanted to study and learn more of what resonated with the liberation for women. So my journey started expanding and instead of focusing on my ethnicity, I started studying the other ethnic groups more, especially those that practiced the matriarchal system.

My studies of the Chewa, the Yawo and the Mang'anja who practiced matriarchal system helped me understand why it was important that different ethnic groups needed to deliberately learn more about the other ethnic groups. If we are going to have peace and pluralism that is meaningful, it means we have to go outside our ethnic groups and learn about others.

The second thing that I want to talk about is the fact that, you know, most of the time ethnicity becomes a voting weaponry that is manipulated by politicians all over Africa. I think its always very important that part of the civic education should actually involve the knowledge of each other and to know of the commonality of what unites us, rather than focus more on what divides us. And I think in Malawi right now, it's a very exciting time because of the leadership that came to power on 25th June 2020 under the leadership of Reverend Dr. Lazarus Chakwera and Dr. Saulos Chilima. One of the beautiful things is that Dr. Chakwera actually integrates the North and Central region very effectively though marriage and life. Dr. Chilima is from the Central region, but also has the heart to integrate with the whole Malawi region. So, they were talking about Government of National Unity, where each Malawian will participate.

Some of the things I picked up from the rhetoric that I hope will become reality is the fact that it's very important to have the process of unraveling the malpractices that have been rooted in the weaponry of ethnicity. To uproot that malpractice and really expose it and find ways of involving Malawians on merit as well as on their commitment to the welfare of Malawians in general. I think at one point, even for Malawi because of ethnic prioritization that has been taking place, it would be very important to have a conversation of ethnicity across the country, so that the misconceptions dries out and the truth that unites the Malawians comes out. For Dr. Chakwera, I think the advantage is that his wife is from the Northern region and he's from the Central region, but he has practiced leadership as a Church Minister that has brought all the religions together. We also need to demystify the historical divisions that were really enforced by the missionary enterprise. The Christians are the majority in Malawi, and they are divided according to the missionaries that came into the North, South and Central (that all focused on their own regions). That also needs to be dealt with and demystified.

The question to me was – what is the role and impact of ethnicity on your understanding of the other person? Let me try and unpack this. When you meet someone new that isn't from your ethnic group, how much of the bias or knowledge of ethnicity plays in your mind as you try to have an encounter with this person? Do you start with giving someone a chance to be themselves and you to experience who they are, or do you start with few biases that have been entrenched in you from your own understanding of the ethnic group? If so, how can we, in this group, help so we do not judge the other because of their ethnic background, but we actually give each person the chance to be themselves and are willing to refute the role and impact of ethnicity on the national identity and agenda as well as the Pan African agenda. I hope my multifaceted questions are clear.

Thank you so much.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Thank you Sister Fulata.

Dr. Fulata Moyo, Malawi: You are welcome, my dear.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: These are really deep reflections, Fulata Moyo, taking us through the history of how our Ethnic identities came to be, how to inform our world view and experiences and how we interact. All the foregoing has impacts on Peace and Security. Sister Fulata has

asked us an important question - What is the role and impact of Ethnicity in how we understand 'others'? How do we go back to our humanity?

While we ponder on those thoughts please allow me to invite our next presenter, Sister Hibaa from Djibouti.

Welcome, Hibaa Ismael.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti: Thank you Kijala, and thank you all for giving me the opportunity to present here on this important topic.

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening wherever you are, all of you, wherever you are joining us from. My name is Hibaa Ismael and I am from Djibouti and I'm currently based in Kenya where I work. I am very glad that I'm part of this seminar session that gives us some room to reflect on ethnicities and identities, as we all know globally there are some identity issues that we are we as human or as a society are facing. But in this context, we are talking about Africa. And I do believe (and that is my personal view), I believe that the ethnical and identity rift is colonial heritage and is coming from a trauma mostly from post-colonial era. Nevertheless, I will speak about the Djiboutian context, and my personal experience. I hope that you all know that this is my *own* personal reflection. I insist on that and it has nothing to do with the local view or political play. I will reflect on how the society is organized at a personal level.

So Djibouti is a small country in the Horn of Africa. We are a population of less than a million people and we have three main ethnical groups, which are the Somalis, the Afar and Arabs. At a personal level, I am a half Arab from my mother's side and half Somali from my father's side, which makes me a half minority and half majority (which are namely the Arabs who are minorities and the Somalis, namely the Issa clan, which are the majority in in Djibouti).

My personal reflection on ethnicities and identities in Djibouti is the fact that first of all I come from 2 different groups – one is the majority and viewed as elite in our local context, and the other one is a mostly marginalized group. It is quite a journey, at a personal level, because I have witnessed marginalization in my own family, which brought a lot of interesting interactions within the family. But it also constructed us in a somehow positive way as it showed us how integrated we could be in both groups. There was also a rift between both traditions that we had to learn. I had to grasp both and learn which is Arab and which is Somali. But what brought us all tougher was the Islamic tradition and the fact that we were all Muslims. So, within the differences we found commonalities. The fact that we live right now in a globalized world has forced us to be more modern and vocal in how we behave and how we interact with others. Personally, I had privileges coming from the majority side, and I have had discrimination from the other side, but funny enough I have had discrimination even from the majority side, calling me 'half breed', or as not entitled to some rights. There was also discrimination from other minority groups which came from other clans qualifying me as part of the majority and assuming that there was a bias privilege that I was entitled to have, when it wasn't true, especially when I try to base myself (especially in my career) on merit.

We also have to know that there are implications on the ethnical divide in the political environment locally. MPs have to represent their constituencies based on ethnical groups. There is a determined seat for each ethnical group based on the % they represent in the population. Even at a political level, the ministerial portfolios are given to a certain ethnic group to represent the constituencies at a decision-making level. We also experience a lot of career progression based on ethnical affiliation rather than merit. Progression on merit does happen, but its often in few instances.

At the social level, we notice the youth try to overcome/ go beyond this classification of ethnicities when it comes to relationship and marriages. Recently we have witnessed a lot of inter-ethnic marriages that are encouraged and more tolerated than our parents time. But at the same time, the same youth (because of what they witness in their environment), also use the ethnical/clan affiliation to get what they want. They are also some, as we have seen, not physical violence, but there is a weaponization of each ethnic affiliation where we are denying certain groups though social media and though other means of reaching the public. There are groups that victimize themselves, and other groups that show their power in ways that are not obvious, but at the same time systematically embedded in the social life. I think we have come to the point where some youth are trying to overcome these challenges and go beyond that and look at the unity of the country and come together. Often ethnic divide isn't spoken of widely (like it could be in Kenya or other countries) because it is a hush-hush issue. It goes on behind the scenes, it is in the system, and it's in how we live in our everyday lives. Its kind of a taboo to to speak out about it; nevertheless, is still there – you can see it, you can feel it, you can live it.

But overall, I think what we have agreed upon is at the social level and social contract, is that Islam is what brings us all together. We have to know that Djibouti is 98% Muslim, so it's considered an Islamic country. The religion is what brings us together. And there are some scholars, or there are some prominent people that would say, 'you know what? Despite this rift, despite the fact that we are different, we have to accept everyone because we we're all Muslims'. At the end of the day, and also in Islam, we have to recognize that belonging to a certain tribe is not prohibited as long as it's an *identity*, but not to oppress others or not to feel or show its power. But we are all at the same level when it comes to the religion in the eyes of Allah. There are some youth and civil society groups that are trying to organize themselves around that and they're trying to also show the fact that we are all united in the name of religion and in the name of the Nation and the Republic, and that we should all be together rather than divide ourselves and create conflicts; non-essential conflicts.

And we don't want to also always victimize ourselves - that is my personal view - I think we shouldn't victimize ourselves and always blame the colonizer for what colonization has brought to us in terms of ethnical division, because we know that politically, that's how we were organized. There was a colonial administration under the French rule, and we followed the same system. Even today, we speak French (the official language) but we also speak Arabic. Why those two languages? It's because they are local languages and French is the one that brings us all together. That was viewed by some of our political personalities back in the days; they wanted to promote that. But also, now Arabic being another worldwide spoken language, we have decided also that it's the language that brings us together as a nation.

Basically, I think that we should come out of the victimization mindset of always blaming the colonizer, because we've come to a point where we are educated enough and we live in a modern and globalized world (as much as globalization has its own negative implications, we should look at the positive implications in our day to day lives).

And we cannot stop at this point. We should have a narrative that brings us all together and we should stop stereotyping groups and stereotyping people based on their ethnicity or affiliations. I do think that there are a lot of 'half-breed' people like me from different ethnic groups, and I do believe these people have the ability to bring everyone together. I always say that you cannot make me choose between my mother and my father. We can choose that narrative to bring us all together or find ways to be less extremist about clan affiliation.

Kijala Shako Kenya: Thank you Sister Hibaa for your thoughts. Important reminder that as Africans, our identities are composed of many intersectionality's - gender, religion, ethnic identity, clans, marital status, rural/urban, rich/ poor. All the foregoing come with perceptions, stereotypes, burdens and responsibilities.

Please feel free to also share your personal experiences, reflections as well as thoughts and ideas of how we can all 'be better' and 'do better', once all the presenters are done

As we reflect on this, please allow me to invite our Sister Chief Sarah Lochodo, the First Kenyan Female from the Turkana Community in Kenya. She is renowned for the efforts she has made bring peace in an area previously known for perennial and prevalent conflict. She is sending her thoughts shortly, but in the meantime please see these links;

Vimeo interview - <https://vimeo.com/39942968>

KTN News Interview - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBP0ewbsVss&feature=youtu.be>

One of the assignments that Chief Sarah has is dealing with disarmament because her community is so marginalized. Chiefs from communities that are not marginalized do not have to deal with disarmament themselves. This makes a very clear link to Sessional Paper no. 10 of 1965 that Alice had referred to in her opening remarks. The reason her community, the Turkana, have guns in the first place is because the Government has not been able to provide security. This links back to our main topic for this seminar.

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya: Well ladies, good afternoon. This is Chief Sarah speaking. Though I was tied in a very tight program here in Kitale, I just arrived from my home yesterday. I was running up and down to make things meet before I release my other family members to go back to Turkana. Thank God I'm able to sit somewhere so that I can also be part of this very important discussion for women, especially the minority group. Well, let me just go straight to my experiences as a Turkana woman - and at the same time as a female Chief - in this position well dominated by men in Kenya. I was employed in the year 2002, but my first appointment was issued to me in 2001. However, when I received this, the immediate leaders of Turkana South, including the MP, went to higher offices and revoked my appointment saying a woman was unable to hold a position in a kind of place like Kainuk, where insecurity has been rampant.

But my spirit wouldn't die. They advertised the position again, I took interest, wrote my application again and was called for an interview. At the interview, they asked only one question which was; There has been some insecurity in your area, people have been killed and many families have been displaced. If you have this job, and are not only a woman but also the only government representative remaining, and people are running to you for assistance, what are you going to do?

I took a deep breath and said, a man would try and get revenge, pursue livestock or even kill more than the number that were killed. As a woman, I would pursue dialogue, because as a mother, it is always good to discuss things with family members, as I believe the conflicting communities are all families of Kenya. So, there is no way a Pokot, who is a Kenyan, can resist hearing from an authority figure, and especially a mother who is in the neighborhood.

So, ladies, they clapped and that was the end of my interview. After two months, I was given my appointment letter, becoming the first woman to hold the position as Assistant Chief Sarah. Now, when I started my job and started serving my community, the first challenge I met was through my immediate boss, the Assistant County Commissioner. He called for a leader's meeting and asked for chairs for the male leaders to sit. And the person he asked to arrange the chairs? Assistant Chief Sarah. I said no way, we shall collect and arrange the seats together. Looking at my face, no one disputed what I said, and they all picked their chairs and started arranging them!

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Thank you all for your informed perspective. I'm learning a lot. It seems the issues are similar everywhere. My experience while in primary school in the late 70's and early 80's are rekindled in this discourse. Being a minority is not a choice which many of us have chosen, but a Providence where we have no choice. I belong to a majority ethnic group in Nigeria (Fulani/Peul), but I grew up where the Fulani are considered the minorities. I went through many humiliations including being forced to sing a composed song to denigrate my own ethnic group every day in the physical education class. Those on this platform from Nigeria are living witnesses to this denigrating song against the Fulani tribe (Auren Fulani, ba kyau. Kullun-Kullun ga Nono da Mai). Justice Ladi Madaki, Fatima, Monica Tete - I'm sure you haven't forgotten this song! So, as a Fulani you are forced to dance and sing against your own people. This has left an indelible mark in my subconscious mind. It is the bad and worst form of negative ethnicism. This infamous song I think went through up to the late 90's where it was stopped. Even today in some instances you are denied access to so many opportunities because of your ethnic identity. It is still prevalent in many states in Nigeria of today.

Fatima Suleiman, Nigeria (commenting on Chief Sarah Lochodo's video): ... unique strategy for mediation.

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya: Ladies, unfortunately it seems that I am unable to send the clip I had recorded for you. However, in that clip I had highlighted the challenges I had met as a woman though my appointment, and the efforts I had made to reach that place. Since my appointment, in Turkana County we have more than 12 ladies who have joined. I have lobbied for many of them to join as administrators. I got good references especially from the Governor who said that he wanted women who stand firm in peace and development, like Chief Sarah – and that always gave me encouragement, and made me not regret appointment to this job.

One day the Turkana people (where I come from) went to raid the Pokot people. After the raid, I told the police that we must recover the more than the 500 livestock that was stolen, and after a day they (police) were able to recover the livestock. The next day I was traveling from one location to another, and surprisingly I met the boys that stole the livestock by the highway. I was wondering what they were doing, and it turns out they heard that I was travelling between sublocations. When they saw me, they shouted, ‘You woman! Get out of the vehicle!’

When I stopped the vehicle, they said, “we hear you are the one that told ‘your husbands’ to come and collect the livestock from us. How many times have the Pokot people raided from us?”

I told them, ‘When you steal from one another, don’t you feel those are small fires constantly burning? Because the Pokot people will not automatically come for you, they will come for the Kainuk people, the women and children. And the Kainuk people will be the losers as they will be killed, and their livestock stolen’.

One of them got angry and demanded I should come out of the vehicle. As I was trying to lock the door, one of them tried to hit me. I decided to come out of the vehicle before they damaged it. Luckily, I had a driver who I instructed to put off the engine.

When I got out of the car, 6 of them, who had guns told me to promise to bring the livestock we they had stolen and we had recovered back, or that my life would be taken that day. The good thing is the Government had issued me with a rifle, a G3 rifle, not an AK47 like theirs. So, I got my gun from the vehicle and told them, if any one of you tries to shoot me, before I die, I will spray many bullets and kill you. With this, they ran away, and as they did, I started shooting in the air to scare them. I then returned to my place, but inside, I was hurting a lot.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Thank You Ndugu (Brother) Salim for sharing your personal experiences.

Listening to you and our discussants today, it is indeed evident that the experiences are the same all over. Of greater concern remains the ability of political leaders to weaponize our ethnic identities especially around election seasons.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: I liked that Fulata mentioned boarding schools and intermarriage as a good way of exposing people to other ethnicities and bridging divides. Do Sarah and Hibaa have similar experiences?

Fatima Suleiman, Nigeria (responding to Salim Musa Umar): Very true. When majority groups are treated like minority groups due to discrimination based on competition on resources and power tussle. The issues are ongoing and should be discussed.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Thanks for this, Alice Nderitu. As I recall, in Kenya it was one of the foundational reasons for starting National and Provincial boarding schools. They became a melting point for people from different ethnic groups and backgrounds with the aim of building national unity.

Dr. Fulata Moyo, Malawi: Great point about the role of this kind of education institutions, intermarriage etc.

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya: I also forgot to mention that once you come to Turkana and you want to return to say Nairobi or Kitale or Kapenguria, people will wonder where you are going, until you mention to them that you're going to Kenya. This is because of the historic discrimination that has been there ever since colonial times. During that time, the Turkana people had acquired guns (that was back in 1933. I remember 1933 because my dad was a councilor when the Italian Government had bombed Kenya). The Turkana people acquired guns because they heard that the mzungu (white people) were coming to Kenya and these were people with no toes (you know when you put on shoes people will say you do not have toes). So, they said people who are very white – they look like ghosts – are coming to our area. So, the Turkana conspired with the then Ethiopian Government and got the first gun to defend themselves, and they acquired more guns when Idi Amin was in power. This was all to protect themselves.

When the Kenyan Government took over from colonialists, the Turkana people still couldn't believe this because they were seeing them as other mzungu – they 'had no toes', they were wearing trousers (which was strange to them), they were covering their heads with I don't know what – all those kinds of things. Remember this was leadership of a man. How I wish I was there as Chief Sarah because those (the Turkana) are the right people to deal with. Listen to them and bring them on board, and there would have been some development by then. You know the Government ignored the Turkana people until the Moi Regime when it was the first time, we saw a tarmac road pass through my place in 1979 (but the first time President Moi came through our road was in 1982. After that the Kibaki Government brought electricity in 1997.

You see, had they (the Government) brought them (the Turkana people) on board from the beginning, maybe these people wouldn't have multiplied their guns until it was a menace.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti (responding to Alice Nderitu): Hi Alice, in Djibouti we don't really have a tradition of having boarding schools. It's mostly day school. I believe the only way that helps us bridge gaps in the society is mostly based in school meetings or working environment. When it comes to intermarriages however, being a very small population, we mostly all know each other. Even if we don't know the person, we know a member of his/her family. That's where the clanship or ethnical reference helps us.

Doreen Nkala, Zimbabwe (responding to Alice Nderitu): Boarding schools surely help. I had the same experience of being an odd one amongst a tribe and I found myself later in life getting married to unacceptable tribe according to my family, but it was eventually accepted.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Sister Fulata has asked us an important question - What is the role and impact of ethnicity in how we understand 'others'? Do we have stereotypes about other ethnic groups? How do we unlearn these habits, some of which have been passed on from generation to generation?

Hi Doreen. please expound for us a bit what these experiences in boarding school were. How did your family finally accept your choice of spouse?

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya: Well right now the Turkana people do not circumcise their women. But since I am neighboring the Pokot Community, I know that the Pokot women do it. And though our linkages as women, the Turkana and Pokot women talk about their experiences and we tell the Pokot women its not good to do those kinds of things. We actually then realized that FGM wasn't even started by women. It was from men who initiated it in the communities because FGM deters women from having sexual urges, and once you have destabilized your woman in that, even if you go marry another woman in five years, this woman will still be waiting for you until you come back and drop your seed in the name of a child.

A case of FGM happened last month and we conspired with the chiefs and arrested those people because it wasn't proper circumcising school children. And then in Turkana, no one will do anything like early marriages because they know very well that I will arrest someone and imprison them for that. When you compare many locations with mine, I don't think you will find any cases at the moment.

Our regional commissioner was saying that every Chief will be held responsible for a child getting pregnant in their area. You will take that child to the clinic. In my area I told my people that before my bosses come for me, I will come for any of you (whichever parent I get a hold of). Right now there is no school, and you find your child pregnant? There is no way that I will swallow that. Before my Government comes for me I would have gotten a hold of you and you will be accountable. I am sorry for that, but that is my stance.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: I would like add here that being a minority is not something that you can change, but allowing the perceived discriminations (real or imagined) to weight you or your community down is a choice that you don't have the luxury to allow. The good thing is that in all countries, there are laws against discrimination based on ethnic or religious identity. So where people are discriminated upon, they should rise up to the occasion and put an end to these heinous acts. You can reach the zenith of your chosen careers if you remain focused and fight the distractions of negative narratives based on ethnic identity.

Kijala Shako, Kenya (responding to Salim Musa Umar): Thank you for this wonderful reminder that we can choose to be different and do things differently.

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya: There is a lot of indiscipline and 'bad manners' that happen in boarding school. If Turkana people had the choice, they would not agree to boarding school. But you see, if we had teachers who were assigned to teach our children (even after classes) on how to behave, that would be great. I have heard that pastoralists do not want boarding schools in their area, because they see that children who are always confined develop bad manners – they don't respect them, they don't want to fetch water, they want to behave like the Westerners. You know how children learn from others, they come with different manners. If only we can have good valued instilled by teachers after classes, that would be good.

Pastoralists would always prefer mobile schools because children move with their parents. After classes, they make coagulated milk from their goats and do other chores. But the boarding students get lazy.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Sister Asaaska, thank you for being part of the Seminar today. Please share with us what your experience have been coming from the Rendille Community.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti (responding to Salim Musa Umar): Very true Brother Salim! It is upon us to choose to be rise up or stay on the victimization... Move forward or stay and scream from where we are.

That's why we have to sensitize our new generation.

Dr. Fulata Moyo, Malawi: Chief Sarah, thank you for lifting up the role of motherhood in peace and security - motherhood not confined just to biological but to any form of being a mother or mother figure. My question is: are there any cultural assumptions about motherhood in your own ethnic group that have been helpful to your understanding of your own role in peace and security?

Doreen Nkala, Zimbabwe: First 2 years it was serious discrimination even from some teachers. It turned me into a serious bully because I needed to fight back. I suffered a lot from name calling, for example being Ndebele my nickname was Lobengula. This angered me because Lobengula is associated with selling the country in exchange of sugar. At the same time, I was known for being brutal and this is what I became. I would easily beat up others. So, in the end I fought on behalf of any Ndebele being abused. After 2 years my name was known, and other students avoided me. But the whole of my primary school with the Shona made me understand them better than those of my own tribe. My whole career I have worked away from Matebeleland and now I am fully one of them because I am married there. And I have tried to help some Ndebele manage their anger towards other tribes.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: In Nigeria we have what is called the 'Unity Schools' where children are brought from all states of the federation to learn from each other. Also, after University education there is a programme tagged the 'National Youth Service Corps' where graduates are posted to different states from their own state of origin to serve in communities for one year. It is aimed at unifying the country and understanding our huge diversities. In a way, this is helping in bridging the gap in ethnic diversities in Nigeria.

Doreen Nkala, Zimbabwe (responding to Dr. Fulata Moyo): Motherhood can be tricky - in a different culture you can be blamed for the poor behavior of children.

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya: One time I was going to avert a raid that was taking place in the Pokot side against the Turkana and I had to walk 2 kms with a councilor. He whistled, because that's how the men show other men that a man is coming. But for me as a mother I didn't do anything as there is no way of showing that a woman is coming. When we arrived, the boys planning the raid were angered and asked the councilor why he brought a woman, despite me being a chief. They said I was like a bad omen to them. They said even when if they killed me they would not get any value.

I then realized my power as a woman and mother because they believed if a woman crossed their path before a raid they would be finished. God created me as a mother, and my power was in their belief that if I cross the route of these boys that go to raid and steal from the highway, they would be finished.

When women cross a route where men planning to go to war pass it is considered a bad omen. Therefore, no raid or killing would take place.

Kijala Shako, Kenya (responding to Hibaa Ismael): Are there practical ways in which this is taking place? It would be wonderful to hear from the other participants how they are going about engaging the next generation.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Learning from our shared experiences, is there any better alternative narrative or way we can rally round and discourage the continuation of this ethnic bias against ourselves?

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya (responding to Doreen Nkala): True Doreen, but when children prosper father praises himself.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti (responding to Kijala Shako): Yes, there are attempts from the Government to have exchange school programs within different regions. As in there are some pupils from the South that would go in the Northern part and vice versa. However, it hasn't fully kicked off, because there are a lot that migrate to the Capital City.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria (responding to Hibaa Ismael): Nigeria has been practicing this for over 3 decades. You can learn from our experiences.

Chief Sarah Lochodo, Kenya (responding to Salim Musa Umar): Yes, Salim, by starting from our own house, spouse, children, neighbors, then community.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti (responding to Salim Musa Umar): Yes, we should definitely create some kind of exchange of best practices and tailor it to the local context. Well in our case I think having an open and honest dialogue would be one of the first steps. People are afraid of it, because we don't really want to shake an anchored system that constitutes the essence of the society.

However, if we look at the scientific way of doing things, there are cycles that eventually bring us to an end. I was watching a small documentary yesterday that talked about a prominent Muslim intellectual, called Ibn Khaldun. He was a sociologist and studied how the societies and states survived but eventually came to an end. He assessed that any dynasties would last 120 years, and these should be divided in 40 years before there are changes within the way of lives. It therefore made me think on our personal case and how we should reflect on it; I realized that this is a natural cycle that shall end.

Doreen Nkala, Zimbabwe (responding to Chief Sarah Lochodo): It's easier to start with our families as they want to show they love you as a parent by following your teachings.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya (responding to Salim Musa Umar): We have an equalization fund and devolved Government guaranteed in the Kenyan 2010 Constitution to bring marginalized communities at par with those not marginalized. That has helped.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Thank you so much for the comments and questions. We have another 6 minutes until the end of this part of the seminar...

We are winding up. Allow me to thank all of us. I will not attempt to summarize all that came through at the moment. Please let us continue on this journey of unlearning the negative aspects, learning new ways of being and continue on the path of relearning everyday of our lives and engaging the next generation. Please let us continue the discussion and we will keep responding.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: Thank you Kijala, thank you everyone. There is so much to digest from the conversations today and we invite you all to keep engaging with the topic in the course of, and after the week.

Kijala, I think at some point you too will share your story. We take away so much from panelists today who are actually the first and only woman PhD in their community (Fulata) first Chief (Sarah) and Hibaa, first woman diplomat.

Many thanks everyone and much appreciated. Let's keep talking.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti: Dear Kijala, thank you so much for moderating us through this seminar and allowing us to be vulnerable in this context! It was a difficult subject to tackle! Asante sana (thank you).

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Thank you all for impacting positively on our collective efforts and resolve to better our shared humanity.

Shama Shah, Kenya: Wow, what an informative session this was. Thank you, thank you, thank you to our presenters and moderator!
By the way, this is our 10th Seminar Series – that's pretty impressive, I must say.

Here is a virtual cake to celebrate!!

Enjoy everyone.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti: I think after the lockdown we will need to test Alice's baking skills to celebrate our milestones seminars!

Nevertheless, thank you Shama for everything. You and Alice are great conveners and always make it easy! Congrats on this 10th successful seminar.

Tamador Ahmed Khalid, Sudan: Listening to Hibaa I realized that there is no one single identity, but multiple of identities one can hold. It depends where you are.

Thanks to all...

Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe: Thank you Fulata and Hibaa for the engaging conversation which applies to almost all, if not all, African countries. My experience is sadly slightly different from a lot of people here. I realized tribalism is much more magnified in leadership structures and more perpetuated through educated people. Zimbabwean Parliament is also divided on tribal lines which has not helped our already bad situation. In universities people cluster as tribes and narratives are written. Political leadership commitment to managing these challenges should also be questioned. I also however want to enquire from Rwandans here. I discovered that their identity cards are now written Rwandan instead of the clan and districts of origin. This goes a long way in ensuring unity.

Asaaska Labarakwe, Kenya: It is great reading all the different experiences on today's discussion. My name is Asaaska and I come from the Rendille tribe in Northern Kenya (Marsabit County). I was born and brought up in Marsabit up until when I came to Nairobi for my undergraduate studies. To begin with, all the tribes in Northern Kenya are nomadic pastoralists who have been marginalized for decades. For Northern Kenya, devolution was/is the best thing that ever happened! The change of the government structures since the promulgation of Kenya's Constitution 2010 has brought political goods and services closer to the people. This has helped a ton to build ownership of the projects in the region. Compared to before devolution whereby we never felt we belonged. The phrase "I am going to Kenya" for citizens of the Northern Kenya when traveling to other parts of Kenya epitomizes exclusion of the region since independence in 1963. For example, we have always been subjected to vetting when applying for National ID's or for passports which always made us feel like we are being profiled.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: Thank you for sharing your stories. They are extremely touching and educative. Having heard that Fulata is from North Malawi and chief Sarah is also from Northern Kenya, I was just wondering why most minority groups are located in the North of most countries... It's just a wonder...

Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe (responding to Tamador Ahmed Khalid): Yes, and this is very true for Zimbabwe. There are two prominent tribes of the Shona and Ndebele. Within these two umbrella tribes are other smaller tribes and the Shona tribe is the majority. Within these smaller clusters there are dominating tribes who conveniently or strategically manipulate the smaller tribes in different contexts. Needless to say the issue of the dominated and dominator also has implications on resource distribution and thus regional development or marginalization stemming from tribal politics.

Doreen Nkala, Zimbabwe (responding to Dr. Mandiedza Parichi): Very true, but the worst is when people don't make effort and end up blaming tribal victimization. It distorts a lot of things and at times kills potential.

Shama Shah, Kenya: As we officially close our session today, please feel free to continue the conversation. I know this is a heavy one and would need time to digest.

I'd just like to remind everyone of our guidelines;

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism – Africa is a non-profit network of peace wakers that offers expertise in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict through a Peace and Pluralism approach, contributing to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

We set up this group to bring together women leaders working across various thematic social justice areas particularly peace building and women's meaningful participation in decision making roles.

We have enabling guidelines, for the users of our WhatsApp group and website, not rules;

1) The CVPP group was formed as an inclusive space for women safeguarding diverse spaces for dialogue by all generations, transforming and resolving violent conflicts, contributing to human dignity and social justice. Ensure your post is relevant and purposeful.

2) Avoid forwards unless they are relevant to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Avoid cross posting by going through what has been shared to confirm you are not reposting and cross-posting. Links are encouraged. Spamming will pile chats, meaning most will then not follow the discussions.

3) Analyze and give your view or perspective on a subject with respect.

4) We are guided by values and principles as well as our standing as leaders in society and sexist, ethnic, racist, homophobic, political party specific and other demeaning comments or attacks are not allowed. Avoid narrow group views. Stereotypes shall not be entertained on CVPP. Be tolerant and respectful.

5) CVPP is not a place for rumors, innuendo, propaganda, myths or conspiracy theories. Members are asked to share or present what they know to be the truth, facts, evidence or data/information on a subject being discussed.

6) Before posting or replying, always ask yourself this: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it relevant? Is it necessary? Is this a good time to post? Is this going to encourage discussions or degenerate into animosity? Freedom of expression does not relieve you of your obligation to courtesy, decency and decorum.

7) Contribute regularly and share information on what you are doing to promote our stated common objectives. Consider this a conversation. It is not okay for you to just read other people's input without contributing, asking for information, or suggesting improvements.

8) Do not personalize your chats. Always stick to the issue being discussed or ventilated on without attacking or discussing the person who originated or has commented on the subject.

9) Announcement of events your organization or others are doing is encouraged. However, you cannot initiate causes or activities on CCVP without approval from the forum admin before circulation.

10) We may at times, after discussion here on the forum, support a cause we see as key to encouraging members on CVPP or communities that CVPP Members support or are part of. If such causes are acceptable, the admins shall set up a separate group to advance such an activity or cause.

11) Any information that is produced here in a facilitated manner, such as the Seminar Series is Copyright to CVPP.

To protect this as a safe space, no one is allowed to upload or use any conversation here without obtaining permission. The Seminar Series on the CVPP website <https://peaceandpluralism.org/> carries the following information “Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism asserts the right to be identified as the author of this work. All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and the written permission of the presenter. This Seminar Series is available through the Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism website, <https://peaceandpluralism.org/>.

12) CVPP exists because members make what we do possible through their voluntary work. We wish to thank you most sincerely for being members of this CVPP family.

The 10th Workshop officially ended with thanks and appreciation for the day’s panelists and moderator.

Biographies



Hibaa Ismael

Hibaa-Haibado Ismael Houssein, is a Djiboutian Diplomat currently deployed in Kenya, as a Third counsellor in charge of Multilateral Affairs and Deputy Permanent Representative of UNEP and UN-Habitat. She is responsible in following issues related to AMISOM and its logistical support for Djiboutian troops deployed under that umbrella, through the UNSOS (UN

Support Office for Somalia) office. She is also a member of the FemWise network since 2018. She has an extensive knowledge on the Horn of Africa region and its political dynamics.

She is a graduate of the Institute of Peace and Security Studies of the Addis Ababa University, where she earned an Executive Master in Peace and Security, prior to that she has graduated from the Help University College in Malaysia in Business Administration.

Having embraced the business environment through various experience in a consultancy company and English teaching school, where she was in charge of marketing, she has shifted to diplomacy, a field that she was passionate about where she got the opportunity to defend the interests of her country and the African continent.



Fulata Moyo

Fulata L. Moyo is a World Council of Churches' programme executive for the project on A Just Community of Women and Men based at the headquarters in Geneva. She believes that within the religious tradition that women are made in God's image are authentic resources to affirm the dignity and entitlement of women to human rights. She received her doctorate from the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in Religion and Theology focusing in Gender and Sexual Ethics with grounding studies in Sexual Ethics, Feminist Liberation Theologies, and Epidemiology, social scientific research methodologies from Yale University's Divinity School and Department of Public Health respectively, Connecticut, USA.

She is passionate about working with religious resources to raise awareness and build a movement of gender justice and peace with zero tolerance for sexual and gender based violence. To this end, she works on mobilizing churches to adopt the Thursdays in Black campaign for a world without rape and violence, which was born during the ecumenical decade of churches in solidarity with women (1988-1998), inspired by several women's protest movements including: the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina who were protesting at the Plaza de Mayo on Thursdays against violence that had their children killed; the Women in Black in Israel and other

parts who were then protesting against the use of rape as a weapon of war, and Black Sash in South Africa.

Her WCC protocol includes a mandate to coordinate the building of women's networks in liaison with the 345 WCC's member churches both in processes of awareness raising and policy making locally, regionally as well as internationally especially through participation in the UN sessions including the Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council, CEDAW and UPR, and how to access and implement SDG5 and the UNSCR1325.

Currently she is a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, USA where she is developing an Ethic of Care with guidelines to help religious communities to respond to trafficked and sexually violated women and girls through accompaniment towards healing and wholeness. She is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. She is a Board member of Life and Peace Institute based in Sweden <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-fulata-l-moyo-world-council-of-churches>.



Chief Sarah Lochodo

Sarah is the area chief of Kainuk, Turkana, Kenya. She is the only woman negotiating among seminomadic ethnic communities in a region plagued by banditry and cattle rustling. She has led several disarmament exercises.



Kijala Shako

Kijala Shako is a Pan Africanist disruptor extraordinaire. She loves to challenge narratives and facilitate “difficult” conversations on different issues ranging from human rights, religion, sexuality, racism, ethnic relations and all other isms.

She is currently the Head of Advocacy, Campaigns, Communications and Media for Save the Children, East and Southern Africa. She is a strategic thinker who has built her experience on academic qualifications comprising of a law degree from the Parklands Law Campus of the University of Nairobi and a Master of Arts in International Conflict Management from the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies of the University of Nairobi.

Her career spans 20’ years’, with proven leadership and extensive experience in Child Rights, Institutional Development, Social Mobilisation and Coalition Building, Democratic Governance, Resource Mobilisation, Youth Engagement, Advocacy and Campaigns across Africa. LinkedIn Profile <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kijala-shako-ba615a35/>.