



Muslims & Christians in DR Congo Building Relationships with Nigerian Film Screening & Face-to-Face Dialogue

Saturday, 15 March 2014
Kinshasa — Democratic Republic of Congo

The Participants



Elesse & Virginia Bafandjo (Christian)



Moussa Bimbwa (Muslim)



Madam Mamie Bafule (Christian)



Youssouf Kasongo (Muslim)



Glody Liandja (Christian)



Ramazini Tshamala (Muslim)



Henrica Badibiabu (Christian Albino)



Issa Zuka (Muslim)



Bibiche Lubanzadio (Christian)



Omar Luyeye Percy (Muslim)

The original photos of this dramatic Christian-Muslim event were destroyed by a computer virus. The powerful heart-to-heart conversations were worthy of being preserved below.

BACKGROUND

In January 2012, the grassroots citizen-facilitators Elesse and Virginia Bafandjo discovered a documentary film, [DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future](#).

The DVD gave them the inspiration and communication tools to initiate **many face-to-face engagement experiences** for diverse women, men, and youth of their community, illustrated at <http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriadrcongo.htm>



FLOW FOR THE DAY

- I. Welcome and Context
- II. Expressions of gratitude
- III. Introduction of HRV -- Human Relationship-deficiency Virus
- IV. Documentary film screening -- DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future
- V. Listening to Muslims and Christians responding to the film
- VI. Face-to-face personal story sharing between Christians and Muslims
- VII. Collective assimilation of face-to-face exchanges between Muslims and Christians
- VIII. Closing

I. Welcome and Context



At the outset, we affirm our indescribable joy of having succeeded in organizing this historic encounter between Christians and Muslims.

We acknowledge that the prevailing violence in Central Africa between Muslims and Christians has greatly caused and inspired us to organize this meeting between in DR Congo to prevent similar wars of religion and the painful consequences that result from disengagement, indifference, and religious intolerance,

For the sake of creativity and innovation, we are investing time and energy to transmit new tools for dialogue contained in the DVD we received from Libby and Len Traubman of the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue in California, USA. The value of their work for inclusiveness remains priceless. Their local and global activities bringing people together are described in [Wikipedia](#) and at <http://traubman.igc.org/dg-prog.htm>

II. Expressions of gratitude

1. We welcome and thank all the participants who intend to learn about and celebrate one another, and who said "yes" to the invitation despite the very hot weather.
2. We are grateful to Libby and Len Traubman. Although absent, their indispensable video and audio equipment for such meetings is also a way of speaking for them among us.
3. Finally, we recall with appreciation the interest and courage of many diverse participants of the past, successful film screenings and reconciliations facilitated by us, Elesse and Virginia Bafandjo, documented at <http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriadrcongo.htm>

III. Introduction of HRV -- Human Relationship-deficiency Virus

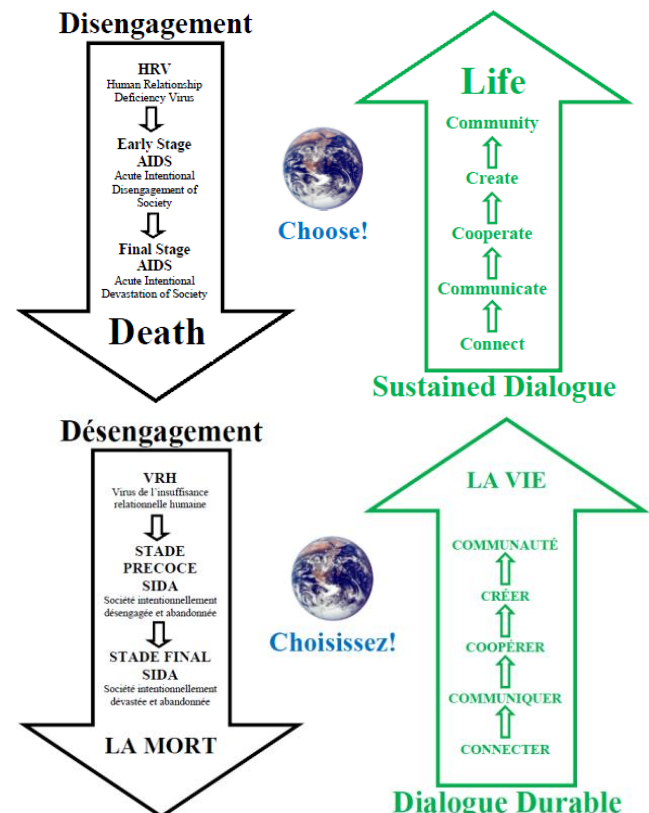
A bigger killer than HIV/AIDS is HRV - Human Relationship-deficiency Virus. This is further clarified by Nigerian educator and peacebuilder, Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba.

English — <http://traubman.igc.org/nigeriahrv.pdf>

French — <http://traubman.igc.org/nigeriahrvfrench.pdf>

This poverty of human relationships and famine of communication skills is preventing us from working together to discover with our collective intelligence to solve humankind's shared challenges and fulfill our high destiny together.

(Participants were excited and interested to see the wisdom and usefulness of this insight. The diagram helped participants see the wisdom and urgency of being together and mastering their own ability to communicate together.)





IV. Documentary film screening DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future



Before the screening, the facilitator reminded participants that the documentary was not for leisurely watching but for a useful rich example of dialogue for humanizing and dignifying adversaries -- the entry point to reconciliation.

Participants were asked to consider two questions as they watched:

1. What in the film touched you, had meaning for you?
2. What new possibility or initiative was awakened in you?

V. Listening to Muslims and Christians responding to the film

Mamie Bafule (Christian)

I think that violence is not good. It is the basis of so many conflicts in families, society and everywhere. I'm convinced the hate is the vehicle of the violence.

After following the film, I am deciding to identify and remove from myself all the roots of my own violence. I'm really recommending the dialogue and will share it!



Moussa Bimbwa (Muslim)

I had a good feeling when I followed the film, because it is a recommendation for Christians and Muslims to gather together.

I'm deeply touched by the suffering of violence in the film between the two religions. I am deciding to promote tolerance and the kind of peaceful relationships that can help Christians and Muslims live together.



Henrica Badibiabu (Christian Albino)



I'm happy to see the film and to know that it is possible to find this kind of self-reflection.

The film illustrates the acts of violence, their sources, and their consequences which are dangerous and awful for the community.

In my experience, Christians never like to live together with Muslim. For example, my friend's parents are now refusing to marry their daughter to a Muslim although they love one another.

I suggest and wish unity and a great peace between Christians and Muslims, especially by means of the gatherings like this today.

Issa Zuka (Muslim)

For me, violence is bad; it's so clear in the film. Our religion, Islam, is not against the dialogue with Christians. Muslims never suffer to dialogue with Christians.

Also, I can give a verse to a Christian that does not allow him to hate a Muslim. I think that there is simply a problem of understanding between Christians and Muslims. A gathering like this one is good and helpful, because it puts us together despite our differences for the development of our country, the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Glody Liandja (Christian)



It is clear in the film that using violence is not good. It is the source of battles, wars, poverty, destruction, and death. I deeply regret that worldwide Muslims and Christians are living like enemies.

I testify that I followed in a foreign news channel Christian and Muslim football players of the same national team who were divided because their religions. I have decided to be above the indifference and separation.

Also today is my first time to discover this sort of gathering. I'm excited! I encourage the initiators and wish more gatherings again!

Youssof Kasongo (Muslim)

Both the violence and the practice and practitioners of dialogue touched me when I was following the wonderful film. The documentary is very good, very deep, esthetic, and educational!

According to me the lack of understanding and sympathy are the main problem between Christians and Muslims. When we do not know something, it is better to ask questions and look for explanations. Most persons in the world privilege first their own egocentric self-interests and opinions, and do not ask useful questions.

As Muslims, we believe Jesus Christ but we do not adore him as Christians do. Yet this must not be allowed to give birth to violence. Peaceful co-existence between our two religions is POSSIBLE.

Also, many Christians incorrectly believe that Islam allows and encourages violence because of kamikaze-like suicide murders like those of Al Qaida. We must not confuse authentic Islam this with tribal violence by some individuals claiming to be Muslim. It is very different! Islam is basically a religion of peace.



Bibiche Lubanzadio (Christian)

After so much attentions to the very, very interesting film, I confess that I remain preoccupied with the troubled relationships between Christians and Muslims and violent practices of both. Because we all have one God, I'm pondering so many difficult questions.

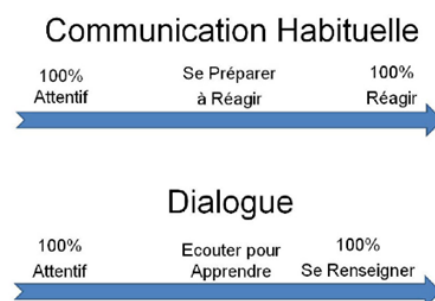
Despite all that, I do encourage this dialogue initiative and want it to repeat and reach many more people. This kind of gathering is for me a great and new discovery. I bless the initiators, Elesse and Virginia!!!



VI. Face-to-face personal story-sharing between Christians and Muslims

Feeling safer and more trusting, Christians and Muslims sat down face-to-face and knees-to-knees.

With curiosity and excellent listening to learn about each other, participants were happy to learn they could communicate personally about their lives, views, fears, and hopes in this dependable way of human engagement revealing that "an enemy is one whose story we have not heard."



VII. Collective assimilation of face-to-face exchanges between Muslims and Christians

Madam Bibiche Lubanzadio (Christian)

We had a good and constructive dialogue which helped us understand that we really are brothers and sisters of the same family.

We cannot be enemies but must do our best live beyond the religious differences and create a harmonious community.

Madam Mamie Bafule (Christian)

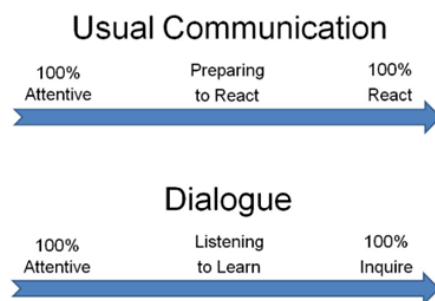
All has been good during the exchange. When we could finally look at one another, I personally appreciated feeling each other closer as never before.

I appreciated his courage to tell me that Christians never have understood or accepted polygamy. He did his best to defend it, and I tried to contradict. Yet we successfully stayed together in harmony.

Madam Henrica Badibiabu (Christian Albino)

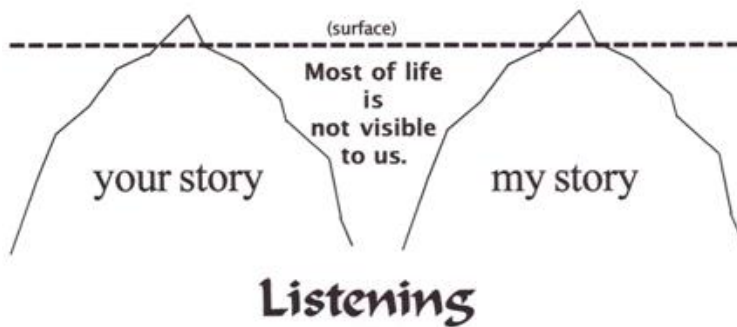
I'm very edified by our exchange and experience of dialogue. The Muslim clearly explained for me about polygamy in Islam.

He also helped me know about his particular attention and sensitivity to albinos and our problems of discriminations and maltreatment in our country. We wished for each other to reach harmony, peace, and tolerance in our lives.



Story

"An enemy is one whose story we have not heard."
Gene Knudsen-Hoffman



Moussa Bimwa (Muslim)

Ho, what a living experience of peace!! It was wonderful for both of us! Madam Bibiche was amazed to discover that I'm a Muslim, because of my tolerance and ability to listen.

Our conversation easily and naturally turned to the value of tolerance which is important to determine the harmonious co existence of our two religions in successful community.

Issa Zuka (Muslim)

The Christian in front of me was preoccupied by polygamy in Islam. I explained the problem: the quran does not forbid having many wives. But the husband must be able to faithfully take care of each wife with equal comfort, safety, affection, and generosity.

Omar Luyeye Percy (Muslim)

I enjoyed our dialogue its atmosphere of joy and respect. I explained that the differences in ways to reach God cannot make us enemies. We must be able to live in diversity which is the law of the nature.

Youssouf Kasongo (Muslim)

Our dialogue exchange was a great success! Earlier we could not have imagined this kind of opportunity would be possible for us to reflect on peace and rejecting violence.

Knowing that Christians and Muslims of DR Congo are popularly considered "enemies," we agreed that we enable this mutual demonizing and give birth to violent acts because of our silence, latent indifference, passivity, and disengagement.

My brother Christian was afraid of (1) terrorism and (2) polygamy in Islam. I clarified that terrorism does not come from Islam. It is a social phenomenon found everywhere. It is a problem of misinformation and misunderstanding about the practice of true Islam.

To practice polygamy, Islam has strict conditions to fulfill. The husband must provide and care for the wives with justice and equality. I enjoyed and appreciated the harmony and the tolerance in our exchange.

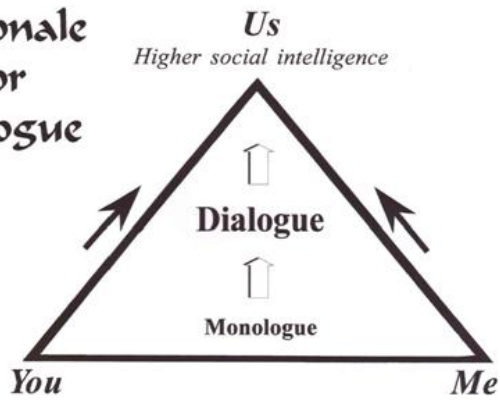


VIII. Closing

Clearly Christian and Muslim touched one another's hearts. The women and men participants were smiling and greeting each other with warm congratulations. Differences of religion between the people were not visible.

Yes, Muslims and Christians listened-to-learn and discovered their equal humanity and that "an enemy is one whose story we have not heard."

Rationale for Dialogue



We were all winners, with no losers! Together in dialogue, both Christians and Muslims won because they were courageous and able to find a common intelligence for the welfare of all the community.

We shared light refreshments then took a photo of our new family. The photos vanished from a computer virus, but the image lives within us.

For more information:

Elesse & Virginia Bafandjo
Kinshasa, DR Congo
MLADRC.Elvi@yahoo.fr



This document is on the Web at
<http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriadrcongointerfaith.htm>

The larger story of
Relationship-Building Steps in Kinshasa, DR Congo
<http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriadrcongo.htm>