

**BARAKA POLICY INSTITUTE (BPI)
EAST LEGON-ACCRA**

CONFERENCE REPORT

**NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING CONFERENCE FOR INFLUENTIAL
MUSLIM YOUTH LEADERS IN GHANA**

OCTOBER 2016

1. CONFERENCE FOCUS AND CONTEXT

1.1 Background

Every progressive community and nation plan around its youth and secure the future for its ageing citizenry through the effective activities and combination of resources at the disposal of the youth. It is also an undeniable fact that any community which neglects the development of its youth is as well neglecting its own development. However, the Muslim community in Ghana faces a huge development deficit as a result of the lack of capacity building and general counseling avenues for the youth. This has rendered a significant number of the Muslim youth vulnerable to numerous social vices. They are also prone to extremists who may use them to perpetrate violence in the community.

It was against this background that the Baraka Policy Institute with funding support from the US Embassy in Ghana organized the two - day capacity building conference for influential Muslim Youth leaders in Ghana with the objective of equipping them with effective leadership skills, community development strategies and knowledge on peace building.

The conference was under the theme *“Enhancing the Capacity of the Muslim youth for Sustainable Community Development”*. It was held from 21-22 October, 2016 at the Institute of Local Government Studies in Accra, from 8:30am-5:30pm on the first day and 8am-4pm on the second day. Participants from outside Accra arrived on the 20th October, 2016.

1.2 Conference core objectives

1. To build the capacity of the youth leaders for effective community work
2. To provide the youth with transformational leadership skills and aptitudes in the context of contributing to community development
3. To sensitize the youth on the need for religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims.
4. To create a unique platform for mentorship for emerging Muslim youth leaders.

2. THE CONFERENCE

2.1 Attendance/Participants

Ninety two (92) participants drawn from all the regions and major towns of the country attended the conference. These were youth leaders whose community-based organisations are recognised by the Muslim leadership and local authorities in their respective communities. Thirty two (32) of them were female representing 35% of the total participants. (The full Participants information and Attendance lists are attached).

2.2 Key Conference Business

2.2.1 Formal Opening

The conference was opened with a short ceremony marked with speeches from the BPI represented by its Executive Director, Mr. Haruna Zagoon-Sayeed and the president, Mr Salem Kalmoni. They both spoke on the objectives of the conference and also expressed their appreciation to the US Embassy for agreeing to co-share funding for the program. Two key Muslim personalities in the persons of Dr Rabiatu Ammah Konney, a member of Council of State (Ghana's presidential advisory council), and Real Admiral Munir Tahiru (rtd), a former Commandant of the Ghana Military Academy were also present. They both spoke on the importance of good leadership for every organization and society. Madam Sarah Shabbir, the Cultural Attaché of the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Accra, representing the embassy, explained that the US government and its people believe in the values of human development and therefore capacity building programs are very key in the efforts to achieve this, hence the Embassy's support for the conference. The session was chaired by Dr Abdul Baasit Aziz Bamba, a Lecturer at the University of Ghana School of Law and a Board member of BPI.

2.2.2 Keynotes Addresses

Three keynotes addresses were delivered at the conference. The keynotes were delivered on the following sub-themes of the conference:

1. The Muslim Youth, Peacebuilding and Development; delivered by Mr Haruna Zagoon-Sayeed, the Executive Director of Baraka Policy Institute (BPI)

2. Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Development in Muslim Communities in Ghana; delivered by Sheikh Armiyawo Shaibu, Regional Manager of the Islamic Education Unit, Accra and the Spokesperson for the National Chief Imam
3. Leadership Imperatives for Concrete Community Progress; delivered by Sheikh Ishaak Nuamah, a renowned Educationist and a social Researcher, also a board member of BPI

Each presentation was allotted 1hour :20mins (40mins each for delivery of lecture and a question & answer/open forum). Participants received in depth knowledge on the various topics and asked relevant questions on each presentation.

2.2.3 Mentorship Sessions

The Conference witnessed interaction sessions with renowned personalities who occupy key leadership positions in the fields of entrepreneurship and Academia. The first to interact with participants was Mr Salem Kalmoni, the MD of Japan Motors and its sister companies in the Kalmoni Group of Companies. He is also the President of the Baraka Policy Institute (BPI). He had a 30mins interaction with the youth leaders telling them how he has managed a huge family business and its subsidiary companies for twenty six years when he was only 24 years old. He answered several questions posed to him by participants bothering on principles of success and sharing his rich experience as successful entrepreneur.

The second personality who interacted with the conference was Mr Alhassan Andani, the MD of Stanbic Bank Ghana Ltd, a member of the Global Standard Bank Group. He is also the Board Chair of the Baraka Policy Institute. He has a very rich experience in Transformational Leadership and in Corporate Governance. He shared his life experience with participants on how he struggled through life but with determination and discipline, he was able to reach the height he has reached today. He inspired the youth and asked them not to be discouraged by their background.

The third to visit was a young Muslim, Mr Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar who had just returned from the YALI program in the United States of America. He shared his experience with the participants on the benefits of the program. He expounded on how amazing the people of United States are and the unlimited religious freedom that exist for all people including Muslims to practice their religion in the United States contrary to perceptions held by many people.

2.2.4 Problem Solving Workshop/Group Deliberations

Participants were also given a task on leadership situational challenges to solve. Participants were grouped into three and each presented with a specific case problem to solve. Participants presented their solutions after 40 minutes of deliberations. (The cases given and the solutions provided by respective groups are attached).

2.2.5 Information Session

The participants at the conference also had the opportunity to receive information on health tips on Preventive Health by Dr Abdullah Abbass, a young Muslim Medical Doctor. Participants also received a guest from the Madina University of Science & Technology, a newly established university college owned by some individual Muslims in Ghana. The Registrar of the university, Naa Alhaj Ali S Pelpuo briefed participants about the university and answered questions from the participants.

2.2.6 Closing Ceremony

At exactly 3:15pm on the second day of the conference, 22nd October, 2016, the closing ceremony of the 2 day conference was held amidst joyous and enthusiastic mood by the participants equipped with some form of fresh ideas and desire to make some impacts in their respective organizations. The session was chaired by Mr Alhassan Andani, the MD of Stanbic Bank Ghana. The Cultural Attaché of the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Ghana, Madam Sarah Shabbir was once again present. In her closing remarks, she reiterated the US Embassy readiness to collaborate with any organization which share common values with them. Madam Shabbir together with another colleague Madam Aisha Serwah Narttey had both participated fully in the first day the conference.

2.2.7 The Media

Seven media houses were present and covered both the opening and closing ceremonies of the conference, four out of which were television channels, two print houses and one radio. The news on the conference were duly telecasted and publicized by these media outlets.

3. KEY CONFERENCE IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

3.1 Conference Impact

The conference made the following impact:

1. Participants were inspired by the rare array of accomplished personalities who interacted with them at the conference (as contained in the conference evaluation report).
2. Practical skills and knowledge for transformational leadership were imparted to participants
3. The need to embrace nonviolence and peacebuilding as young influential Muslim youth leaders.
4. Participants gained skills and knowledge on effective and purposeful youth mobilization for community development.

3.2 Conference Resolutions by Participants

At the end of the conference, participants collectively issued the following communique for further action:

“After successfully discussing the specific topics that the various speakers touched on in relation to the theme of the conference, the following are the resolutions:

- 1) *The need for a National Muslim Youth Policy to guide the useful development of the Muslim youth.*
- 2) *The need for dialogue between the Muslim youth and the Elders of the community in the context of community development.*
- 3) *The need for Chamber of Muslim Youth organizations in Ghana to coordinate the activities of the Muslim youth nationwide.*
- 4) *The need to involve women in leadership responsibilities.*
- 5) *The Youth must get involve in Da’wah work to spread the peaceful nature of Islam.*
- 6) *The Muslim Youth in Ghana must be Ambassadors of Peace.*

We the participants drawn from all the ten regions hereby sincerely pledge to harness our core competencies and that of the organizations we represent for the attainment of the resolutions.

We are grateful to the Board of Baraka Policy Institute and its partner group, US Embassy for this wonderful conference”.

4. CONCLUSION

By and large, the conference was impactful and the participants have resolved to do more for the development of their communities nationwide. It is expected that participants and close collaboration with Baraka Policy Institute (BPI) will organize community workshops to share the knowledge and skills they have acquired at the conference with the mass Muslim youth. BPI will also work closely with participants to ensure the implementation of the resolutions reached at the conference.

(Main Documents attached):

1. Full Participant Data
2. Participants attendance Sheet (to be given later)
3. A copy of the Conference Resolution as presented by the participants (to be given later)
4. Conference Evaluation Report (to be given later)
5. Conference Photos (few given now, more to be added later)

Signed

Haruna Zagoon-Sayeed

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