



**Youth Initiatives in Countering Religious  
Radicalism: A Case Study of Young  
Interfaith Peacemaker Community  
Indonesia**

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## **Abstract**

The rise of religious (particularly Islamic) radicalism in Indonesia recently should ring our alarm. The new phenomenon in this movement is the recruitment and participation of the young generation. However, the struggle of this current movement is not much different from the Islamist movement in general i.e. Islamic State (*khilafah*). The main problem of *khilafah* is that it is against the state foundation (Pancasila) which accepts and respects multi-culturalism and the multi-faiths of Indonesia. It should not be intolerance, discrimination, and violence based on religion. Out of the many cases related to religious intolerance, Christians as the second largest religious community in Indonesia have suffered the most. The good news is that many efforts are taken to prevent and solve this problem. One of them is by a youth community, namely Young Interfaith Peacemaker Community Indonesia (YIPCI). From my interviews and observations, I found that to some degree, what this youth movement has done has had some successful results in countering religious radicalism and intolerance. This analysis gives us a better understanding of the strategic role that youth can play and of the urgent need to replicate this kind of community especially in the current situation in Indonesia.

Key words: youth, interfaith, peacemaking, community, radicalism

## **Academic Paper**

### **“Youth Initiatives in Countering Religious Radicalism:**

#### **Introduction**

Indonesia, as a multi-cultural and multi-religious nation that has since its beginning been based on *Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which recognizes unity in diversity and respect for each people group equally, is in a critical period. The rising influence towards and participation of youth, including university students, in religious radicalism in Indonesia has rung a serious alert to us. This phenomenon is closely related to the long struggle of the Islamists to make Indonesia as an Islamic State (*khilafah*).

The recent general election (in April 2019) has shown that the contestation between Pancasila and *Khilafah* was so oblivious. In the past, the government (which in some level was authoritarian) backed by the military could remove any sporadic efforts of the Islamists

coercively. Since the Reformation Era (1998), coercion became more difficult because Indonesia grew to be more democratic. However, the current government (Joko Widodo) has tried to take a serious measurement by dismissing Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) whose targets are mainly university students. Nevertheless, dismissing the organisation does not mean automatically dismissing its ideology.

Besides the challenge to change the national ideology and foundation, there are some other phenomena that take place frequently from time to time in various places all around the country. Intolerance and discrimination many times have been done in the name of religion, mainly towards the minority groups. Out of those cases, the number of the cases related to Christian–Muslim relations have come out at the top.

It is important to address this issue seriously and urgently, because it is like virus that thrives significantly and influences many spheres of life. Some terrorist attacks recently were done by young people in their twenties, as well as violent acts towards other religious groups by some radical religious groups. Even in the recent general election, religious sentiment is very strongly used to win the votes, including the hope for *kebilafah* if one candidate had won the election last April 2019. It is a serious threat for the nation's unity and relations among religions in Indonesia.

Many actions have been taken by the government, religious groups, NGOs, as well as youth. Out of many youth groups, Young Interfaith Peacemaker Community Indonesia (YIPCI) has become a unique group, because it is interfaith-based and focuses its mission on religious (interfaith) peacemaking, mainly between Muslims and Christians. They recruit and train university students to be religious peacemakers. YIPCI as an interfaith-based student community to some extent has effectively been transforming students from intolerance (social exclusivism) to be tolerant (social pluralism), through peace education, interfaith dialogue, and reconciliation.

An interfaith-based student community for peacebuilding (like YIPCI) is urgently needed in Indonesia to strengthen further the ideology of unity in diversity among religious groups as well as to counter the growing religious radicalism among the youngsters in Indonesia. Due to the limitations of the youth movement in resources, the government and educational institutions need to support and facilitate the forming of a YIPCI-kind of student movement in as many campuses as possible, especially in state universities.

This paper will begin with a brief observation of the Islamist movement in Indonesia from a historical approach and on the challenges in Muslim-Christian relations. These two discussions set the background of the religious tensions in which later Young Interfaith Peacemaker Community Indonesia comes into the picture as a strategic solution in countering radicalism and making peace. In conclusion, I argue that this kind of interfaith community should be replicated on as many campuses and cities as possible.

### *Islamist Movement in Indonesia: brief historical background*

Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* as the state foundation and commitment have been challenged from time to time since the beginning of Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI) in 1945. Currently, it is being challenged by the thriving religious (Islamic) radicalism which also combined with the *Khilafah* movement.

In socio-religious life, the key challenges are found in Muslims-Christians relations as well as in the struggle of the Islamic state. In the New Order Era and early Reformation, Era religious intolerance and conflicts took place more between Christians and Muslims. Nevertheless, in the past few years, it has shifted to the situation like in the formation period of Indonesia: contestation between the Islamists and the nationalists. Among the nationalists, there are Muslims, too, namely moderate Muslims. The Islamists keep trying to change Indonesia to be an Islamic State, while the nationalists defend it as Pancasila State that accepts all religious groups as equal without any discrimination.

The struggle of the Islamic State began when the Japanese formed a body to prepare for Indonesian independence, called BPUPKI in March 1945. From 62 members, 15 persons were representatives from Islamist groups, while the rest are secular-nationalist including 3 Christians. The Islamist group is organized based on Islamic ideology and aims to establish an Islamic State or to apply *shariah* law as normative law. Those 15 BPUPKI members who are considered as Islamists are: Abikusno Cokrosuyoso (PSII), KH. Ahmad Sanusi (PUI), KH Abdul Halim (PUI), Raden Syamsudin (PUI), KH Mas Mansur (Masyumi), Raden Ruslan Wongsokusumo (Masyumi), KH Masykur (NU), KH. Wachid Hasyim (NU), Ki Bagus Hadikusumo (Muhammadiyah), Abdul Kahar Muzakir (Muhammadiyah), Ny. Sunaryo Mangunpuspito (Aisyah), KH. Agus Salim (Penyadar), Sukiman (PII), AR. Baswedan (PAI), Abdul Rahim Pratalykruma (Residen Kediri). (Aritonang 2004: 235-6)

They debated on choosing whether Indonesia would be an Islamic or secular state. Since they could not reach an agreement, they formed a taskforce on 18 June 1945 which was called *Panitia Sembilan*. Their task was to draft the preamble of the Constitution. Four members were from the Islamist group, another four from the nationalist group, and one was Christian. The result was a compromised formulation which was known as *Piagam Jakarta* (Jakarta Charter): “*Ketuhanan dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*” (Divinity with an obligation to practice Islamic law for the adherents). Though it was rejected by some Christian and Javanese Muslim members, the assembly finally accepted the *Piagam Jakarta* formula. They continued the discussion about the government structure. The Islamist proposed the Islamic Kingdom with a *Kalifah*, but finally, the majority agreed to have a republic and a president. Again, the Islamist required that the president must be a Muslim.

Preparation for independence by BPUPKI was interrupted by a tragedy when Japan was bombed by the USA in August 1945. The Japanese formed a new and smaller committee on 7 August 1945 with 27 members called PPKI. Out of 27, only two members were from the Islamist party: Ki Bagus Hadikusumo (Muhammadiyah) and KH Wachid Hasyim (NU). On the morning of 17 August, Soekarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesian Independence and in the evening, Soekarno called for a meeting of four Muslim leaders to discuss the change of the *Piagam Jakarta* formula since the Christians rejected it. Finally, for the purpose of nation unity, they agreed to change it to “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*”. However, some Islamist leaders felt betrayed because of that formula change and continued to struggle (Hefner 2000: 42). Just to mention some of those struggles: DI/ TII/ NII in 1949, in 1955 general election, Konstituante 1953-1959 which made a new constitution. During the New Order Era (1966-1998), the Islamists were suppressed by the government. Nevertheless, during the Reformation Era, they were back and alive again. In the general assembly of MPR in 1999, they proposed to amend the constitution and accepted the Jakarta Charter. Though that attempt was rejected, the spirit was manifested in regional level which produced many regulations (*Perda -Peraturan Daerah*) which is Islamic law in spirit, known as *Perda Syariah*.

### ***Muslim – Christian Relations***

Muslims and Christians are the two largest religious groups in the world. It is undeniable that they have a very significant role both in world peace and conflict. Richard Solomon (2002) says that theologically, both Christian and Muslim teach forgiveness and mercy. Unfortunately, many conflicts and violence are also done in the name of Islam and Christianity. Tony Blair (2010) in

his response to “A Common World between Us and You” emphasizes the significance of Muslim-Christian relations:

*That is why “A Common Word” is so crucial... not only peaceful coexistence but active cooperation between Christians and Muslims – who together comprise about 55% of the earth’s population – is necessary component in making the 21<sup>st</sup> century work more humanely and the earth a better place for all its inhabitants.*

Seeing the global context, some people are sceptical on whether we can have peace as long as Muslims and Christians still fight against each other, but as Hans Kung says, “*There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions*”, and we still hope. In fact, there are more efforts of dialogue between Christians and Muslims all over the world that have taken place in the past ten years especially since the Common Word movement in 2007.<sup>1</sup> Kelly Clark (2012) shows her belief about the hope for Christian-Muslim relations based on their basic beliefs,

*“... the Abrahamic traditions share some fundamental beliefs that are foundational to tolerance and respect of other faiths and other people. These beliefs not only can but also should motivate tolerance and respect for believers of other faiths.”*

Christian-Muslim dialogue has been facilitated through tremendous efforts both locally and globally. When I googled “Christian-Muslim dialogue”, it resulted in around 13,500,000 sites! One of the problems of this dialogue effort is that it mostly involves the high-level leaders while the grassroots are ignorant about it. On the other side, at the grassroots level very rarely are initiatives for dialogue taken. It is one of main factors why at most grassroot levels it is rather easy to be provoked for conflict.

Motives of Christian-Muslim dialogue vary: defending their faith, attacking the other faith, understanding the other faith, and building peaceful relations. Charles Kimball says,

*Several motives have propelled the contemporary dialogue movement. These include desires to foster understanding, to stimulate communication, to correct stereotypes, to work on specific problems of mutual concern, to explore similarities and differences, and to facilitate means of witness and cooperation. The pragmatic need for better understanding and cooperation among adherents in the world's two largest communities of faith—Christianity and Islam—is particularly acute. Together Christians and Muslims*

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<sup>1</sup> Further info about “A Common Word” see: <http://www.acommonword.com/>

*comprise almost half the world's population, so the way in which they relate is bound to have profound consequences for both communities and for the world.<sup>2</sup>*

The long history of conflict, together with misunderstanding, mistrust and animosity, between Christians and Muslims has been one of the obstacles in the Christian-Muslim dialogue. Other obstacles that may be present are the feeling of being threatened and suspicious, especially when Muslims suspect that dialogue becomes a means for Christian mission activities to convert Muslims. Mahmoud Ayoub (2004) sees that at the bottom of the obstacles is the lack of conviction about equality before God,

*“The main obstacle to true Christian-Muslim dialogue on both sides is, I believe, their unwillingness to truly admit that God’s love and providence extend equally to all human beings, regardless of religious identity.”*

Despite all the ongoing conflicts and polemics by some groups of Christians and Muslims, the Christian-Muslim dialogue has been growing also in both quality and quantity.

What is portrayed globally is also what is seen in Indonesia. Setara Institute (2015) reported 177 religious cases in 2014 spread all over Indonesia. Similarly, CRCS UGM since 2008 recorded that the majority of religious problems is between Muslims and Christians.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Methodology***

A qualitative research is used with an observational case study of YIPCI. Data collection is taken by participant observation supplemented with focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, as well as a review of documents. The main events that I observed are Student Interfaith Peace Camp, Young Interfaith Peacemaker National Conference, World Interfaith Harmony Week, International Day of Peace, and Weekly Meeting/ Scriptural Reasoning. Student Interfaith Peace Camp is the entrance gate that serves as member recruitment for YIPCI. While Young Interfaith Peacemaker National Conference is an annual event for all members in all cities, it is considered as the biggest event of YIPCI. Interviews were taken with 30 YIPCI facilitators in four cities: Medan, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya.

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<sup>2</sup>Muslim-Christian Dialogue, Charles A. Kimball. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (<http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0567>, accessed 18 January 2016)

<sup>3</sup> CRCS UGM Annual report can be downloaded at: <http://crs.ugm.ac.id/main/annual-reports>

### *Young Interfaith Peacemaker Community Indonesia (YIPCI)*

Young Interfaith Peacemaker Community (YIPCI) was founded in Yogyakarta on 12 July 2012. YIPCI held its first Student Interfaith Peace Camp in November 2012, attended by 30 Christian and Muslim tertiary students. The content of this camp basically was peace education and interfaith dialogue. These two elements eventually became YIPCI core business which are inseparable like two sides of a coin. Its peace education is based on interfaith values, both the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an. The interfaith dialogue is conducted for the purpose of peacemaking. This Student Interfaith Peace Camp is held twice a year in 4 to 8 cities and becomes the entry point for students to join this community. Most participants experience a change of mind when they join this camp.

Another YIPCI distinct activity is A Common Word dialogue and Scriptural Reasoning, which follows the Common Word movement. It is distinct because not many people use them in building peace between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia. Scriptural Reasoning has become one of the interfaith dialogue means that is suggested and encouraged by "A Common Word" movement and which is accepted and supported by the majority of Muslims and Christians all over the world.

*"For those who have been involved with interfaith dialogue and movements such as the scriptural reasoning project, this is not a remarkable observation in and of itself. But it adds greater significance and influence to the scriptural reasoning movement when the Grand Mufti of Egypt and the Archbishop of Canterbury join with imams and priests to encourage their followers to read the Bible and the Qur'an together. Muslims and Christians learning to read their scriptures in relation rather than in opposition and learning how the other communities understand their own texts could bear unimagined fruits for future generations, especially when they are encouraged to do so by the religious authorities whom they most respect. This emphasis upon the possibilities inherent to scriptural reasoning indicates one of the important ways in which academics have played an important role in working together with religious leaders to shape the ACW initiative. One hopes that this encouragement will help a broader audience apply the tools of comparative scriptural inquiry that the scriptural reasoning movement has developed over the past fifteen years" (ACW 5-Year Anniversary Edition, 32-33)*

I did interviews with 30 YIPCI facilitators in four cities: Medan, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya. The members and facilitators of YIPCI are rather diverse in their socio-religious backgrounds. They came from different families, societies, organizations, denominations, schools



and religious activities. Most of the Muslim respondents came from families that are considered devout in their religiosity. They were taught to read the Qur'an since they were very young at the *Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an*. They lived in a homogenous religious society, especially those who come from the village. They went to a school that was also homogenous. Some Muslims had no relations with someone from another religion (Christian) until they joined the Student Interfaith Peace Camp. They went to Islamic primary school, *pesantren* for secondary school or high school. Some of them went to the state school, but there were very few non-Muslim students at the school, and only one or two Christians. Since they were still little kids, some parents had taught them not to befriend with Christians, but rather to avoid them ("*jangan dekat-dekat*"). Therefore, since they were very young, they all have had some negative prejudices towards Christians at some level. Some of them when they were in high school were active in the Islamic Spiritual group (*Kerohanian Islam*), a student group that at some level is influenced by the Tarbiyah movement.

Some of them also went to the Islamic university which is practically 100% Muslim. Others went to a state university or other private universities. Though there are quite a number of Christians on campus, most of them did not make friends with them and tended to have Muslims as their close friends. Some of them also joined the Islamic student groups which in general do not interact with other religious groups. This fact shows that actually these young people have had seeds of extremism or socio-religious exclusivism since they were very young. If it is rooted deep in extreme ideology and grows in a conducive environment, the kind of fruits will be easily predicted.

In that kind of situation, it is interesting to know why they joined the Student Interfaith Peace Camp at the first place. Most of them joined the Peace Camp because of their friends. They gave positive responses: they also were motivated by their curiosity about Christians, they had no experience in interfaith activity beforehand, they were interested to have non-Muslim friends, they were interested to learn about religion and peace in the midst of conflicts and violence, and they were looking for a new community outside of campus.

They came to the Student Interfaith Peace Camp with their curiosity but also some negative prejudices towards Christians and Christianity. Therefore, the Student Interfaith Peace Camp became most impressive experience for all of them. Not only because it was their first

experience, but also during this Peace Camp most of them experienced a transformation of their prejudices.

They changed from a negative to a more positive view towards “the other”. Some main prejudices that have been hindering them from befriending Christians had been reduced or cleared. They made Christian friends and created a new community that they considered like a new family. They could share, talk and discuss openly and honestly in peaceful interactions. Reconciliation by asking and giving forgiveness to one another between Muslims and Christians during the last day of the Peace Camp had been a memorable moment for most of them. Even for those facilitators when they joined Peace Camp for the second or third time as facilitators, it was still very impressive to see the reconciliation take place.

How about the Christians? Though their background of social environment is rather different from Muslims, basically the impact is rather similar. What made the Christians join the Student Interfaith Peace Camp? In reality, it is harder to get Christian than Muslim students to participate in a Peace Camp and to join YIPCI. To study this phenomenon, different research is needed. Nevertheless, most Christian facilitators who joined the Peace Camp actually had some interfaith interaction with Muslim students before they joined the Peace Camp. They joined Student Interfaith Peace Camp because of their friends who invited them and were supported by their curiosity about this interfaith community. Though they had some interaction with Muslims beforehand, these Christians still had some prejudices. They also experienced change in this Peace Camp.

### **What is the uniqueness of YIPCI compared to the existing religious-based student movement and other interfaith dialogue?**

*Firstly*, a student movement that is concerned and involved in interfaith peacemaking, particularly between Christians and Muslims, as far as I know YIPC is the only one. YIPCI is also not based on a mono-religion but at least two faiths. YIPCI is also interesting because the students who joined it, although only Muslims and Christians, it is actually very diverse. From the Muslims there are Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhamadiyah, Ahmadiyah, Syiah, Tarbiyah, Ihwanul Muslimin, etc. There are those identified as *santri* (from pesantren) and there are those identified as *abangan*. Though quite a lot of YIPCI members study at Islamic universities, in fact, there are not many from from the Comparative Religion department. They have very diverse study backgrounds.

From the theological perspectives, the spectrum is rather wide, from the exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist perspectives. From the Christian side, though the number is less than the Muslims, they are also quite diverse. While they are mostly from Protestant backgrounds, a small percentage are Catholics. For the Protestants, they are from Traditional (Ecumenical) churches, Evangelicals, Pentecostal Charismatics and even the Orthodox Church.

*Secondly*, the vision and main agenda of YIPCI is on religious peacemaking, though in their interfaith dialogue, they are also concerned about social-ethics like anti-corruption, anti-narcotics, religious freedom, and human rights. It is hard to find other student movements that do interfaith dialogue for peacemaking like what YIPCI does. Both Christians and Muslims are supportive towards interfaith dialogue, as has been said by Osman Bakar and Dudley Woodberry.<sup>4</sup>

*Thirdly*, though many or most YIPCI members may have an exclusive faith, YIPCI is not an exclusive community socially. Even for those who first joined YIPCI and were not considered really deep in religious understanding, through joining YIPCI they grew and deepened their faith. YIPCI always builds relations as wide as possible with other organizations. YIPCI is pluralist socially. This is in line with what Miroslav Volf (2015) says that the deeper one's faith is means the greater one's love to God. The more we love God, the more we love our neighbours. Therefore, it is not impossible for people of faith to have an exclusive faith but be pluralist in their social lives. It is common for those with exclusive faiths, to be exclusive socially and for those who are pluralist in faith to be also pluralist socially. Therefore, to be exclusivist in faith but socially pluralist is uncommon.

*Fourthly*, while many interfaith dialogue efforts were held through encounters between the two communities of Muslims and Christians, in YIPCI Muslims and Christians become one community. In other interfaith dialogue efforts, they come for a dialogue, sometimes without continuation. In YIPCI, they are a dialogue community with a continuous dialogue on a regular basis. An interfaith community that purposely has interfaith dialogue is an ideal form to experience all kinds of interfaith dialogue. By experiencing all moments of interfaith dialogue, the risk and potential for conflicts can be minimalized compared to an effort that focuses on theological dialogue only. In addition, by adopting A Common Word spirit, the dialogue in YIPCI is done by the spirit of love.

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<sup>4</sup> In *Peace Building by, between, and beyond Muslims and Evangelical Christian* edited by Mohammaed Abu-Nimer and David Augsburger (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 135, 203

*Fifthly*, in the Indonesian context, doing Scriptural Reasoning as main means of interfaith dialogue is still very rare. Scriptural Reasoning is not familiar even among those in theological and religious studies, both Islamic and Christian. In Scriptural Reasoning the risk for debate is very small because the discussion is not based on each theological perspective, but on the Scriptural text.

*Sixthly*, the other strength of YIPCI is its students or young people. They are in a period of searching for a community (peer group) and also identity. The fact that many young people including tertiary students were recruited by the extremist and terrorist group, showed that they are still searching for identity and a group. Therefore, it is very crucial to influence and recruit them for a positive purpose as early as possible so that they are able to refuse the negative influence whenever it comes. It is always better to prevent rather than to fix.

### **What were the changes that took place when the students joined YIPCI?**

As have been discussed above, in general students changed through their experience in the Student Interfaith Peace Camp and the change continued when they joined different activities after the Peace Camp. Following Swindler's theory of change: Head, Heart, and Hand, the most change in this Peace Camp is Head change, especially their prejudices. This is the most important change actually. Without a change in their worldview, there will be no change in their attitude and behaviour. The prejudices that they had before they joined the Peace Camp are both doctrinal and practical issues such as: Christians worship three gods, Muslims are terrorists, the Holy Scriptures is not authentic, cultural issues in worship and dressing, etc.

### **How (and why) do YIPCI activities help students change their perceptions and attitudes towards the other religion and religious group?**

*Firstly*, by teaching and discussing peace values as well as loving God and loving neighbour (A Common Word spirit) as early as possible when they participate in a Student Interfaith Peace Camp, this is a good and right strategy to change the worldview of the participants. Based on behaviour change theory, to change the worldview is the most crucial and strategic.

Through the Student Interfaith Peace Camp, every participant is convinced that faith, both Islam and Christian faith, are teaching peace and respecting diversity because all are creations of the One God. Moreover, everyone should be bold enough to clarify any prejudice directly to the

“victims”. These materials and education are really effective in changing the worldview so that eventually it changes behaviour too.

Prejudice is very crucial in influencing one’s attitude to others. Most Christians may have prejudice in their belief that Islam is teaching violence and terrorism. Through Student Interfaith Peace Camp and YIPCI, they start to open their mind that actually not all Muslims like that, and they also find that in the Qur’an there are many teachings on peace and against violence. By living together with the Muslims for 3 days and 2 nights, they are able to interact and have religious dialogue directly with Muslims, which for many Christians, was their first experience.

Likewise, many Muslim participants had no Christian friends and even had no interaction with Christians beforehand, because they always lived among Muslim communities. Many Muslims have prejudices towards Christians, such as the beliefs that Christians are infidel (*kafir*), worshipping three Gods (God, Marry, and Jesus), the Bible is corrupted, etc. In YIPCI they are able to clarify those misconceptions directly to the Christians.

Another thing is the Holy Books. Many of them, either Muslim or Christian, experienced for the first time to see, touch and read the other Holy Book. Through *Scriptural Reasoning* every morning, they are encouraged to learn good values from both Scriptures. Moreover, after the Peace Camp, they continue to have Scriptural Reasoning every week that helps them to see more objectively the similarities as well as the uniqueness of both Holy Books. By this practice, they practice what Volf (1996) says as double vision or encountering the seven.<sup>5</sup> They learn to see from here and from there. By learning to view from the other perspective and not only their own perspective, it will help them to break down their prejudices.

These experiences are the process that continuously and gradually change their worldview bit by bit, which later also impacts the behaviour of YIPCI members to become more peaceful to each other. The experiences and the changes strengthen the bonding between them so that they see this community as their family. They see the importance of being part of YIPCI, let alone from time to time with violence in the name of religion continuously happening in many parts of the world. They are more convinced that what YIPCI is doing for religious peacemaking is very important.

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<sup>5</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

Salience and meaning are two important factors in forming group identity. Interestingly, the stronger the YIPCI group identity was, the more open YIPCI is towards embracing other groups. I think it is because the spirit of peace and love that goes deeper as they interact with one another prevents them from being a socially exclusive group. It also supports the multi-identity of YIPCI members because most of the members also belong to another group – either religious or non-religious - before they joined YIPCI. It can be strength for YIPCI, because they can be an important circle of influence for YIPCI to spread the values and spirit of peace to the wider society.

### **How can the interfaith peacemaking of YIPCI be significant to the Christian Muslim relation/ peace building in Indonesia and beyond?**

*Firstly*, YIPCI is working among young people. This is a crucial period in human life, a period for identity searching. Once they are convinced that God created them to be peacemakers, it will prevent and minimize them from getting involved in any extremism and violence. To train them since they are very young about peace and interfaith dialogue will be very significant when they grow older and lead other people. They will be able to train others too. This kind of movement is needed in Indonesia.

*Secondly*, most of the problems in Muslim-Christian relations are because of negative prejudices from both sides. As Volf says, prejudices are the distortions towards another's faith because of our limitations. Lack of interaction in daily life may grow the prejudices to become some actions. Therefore, what YIPCI is doing by putting Muslims and Christians together in one community and having dialogue regularly is very effective to change the prejudices. By facilitating the members to know each other better and by teaching them basic peace education and to love their neighbour, YIPCI has played a very strategic role in peacebuilding: change from enmity into friendship. In Volf's term, this change is from exclusion into embrace.

*Thirdly*, as Volf mentions that combating our prejudices and changing people from exclusion to embrace, double vision is importantly needed. YIPCI has been facilitating a forum that double vision can be practiced by its members, especially in Scriptural Reasoning. Not only can Muslims learn the Qur'an, but the Christians can too, and vice versa with the Bible.

*Fourthly*, YIPCI has answered what Volf (2015) questions, "Can exclusivistic faith advocate pluralism as a political project?" by showing that being an exclusivist in faith does not mean

being exclusive in social (political) life. When someone is more religious (exclusive in faith), she is more pluralist socially. He can accept and respect the differences. For Volf, this question is the key in interfaith relations today in the globalization era.

Because they have differences, in order to understand each other, they should share or witness. Unlike some scholars that discourage witnessing in interfaith dialogue, for Volf (2015) witnessing is unavoidable if we want to know and learn from each other. In YIPCI witnessing is something that is being facilitated and encouraged openly. In the belief that “faith is essentially a free act; a coerced faith is not faith at all,” YIPCI is not afraid about its mission and *dakwah* as long as it is being practiced with respect. Faith is free to share with anyone. When one shares her faith, she should be ready to hear about other faiths too.

### *Conclusion and Recommendation*

YIPCI is a new phenomenon in the student movement which is based on interfaith dialogue and focuses on religious peacemaking. As long as world peace has not been achieved, religious peacemaking is still crucial, and the youth could and should take part in this effort.

YIPCI at some level has been successful as a means of changing worldviews to peacemaking. YIPCI model can be one way to counter radicalism and prevent extremism. Changing worldviews, forming a group identity, as well as experiencing dialogue are very significant for the long process of peace.

To have a larger and faster impact in countering religious intolerance and conflicts, this grassroots movement should be supported by policy makers in both government and education institutions.

#### *1) Education Institution*

Formal education institutions (university level) are one key in supporting and developing this movement. According to the United Nations, one of the four pillars of education is Learning to Live Together in Peace and Harmony. Universities should take this pillar more seriously regarding the growth of radicalism among students on campus. An interfaith-based community like YIPCI is the best model to answer the need.

#### *2) Government*

As many religious radical movements and terrorist groups recruit young people, this kind of community can be one solution to counter it. The National Body Terrorism Counter

(BNPT) should consider supporting and working alongside this community, but not subordinate it under BNPT. To form this kind of community in every university and city all over Indonesia requires more funds and resources, which is very hard to achieve by students themselves. With the support from government, it is very possible.

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