

**The United Nations Interagency  
Task Force on Religion and  
Development**

**Annual Report 2019**







## OVERVIEW

This report provides an overview of the engagement with faith-based actors and faith-related activities by the UN system members of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (short: UN Task Force on Religion/IATF-Religion) covering 2019.

This annual report documents the activities, initiatives and efforts undertaken by diverse UN system entities, members of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development. None of the opinions expressed here reflect those of the United Nations system, its member entities, Governing Board(s), or territory/territories.

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# Members of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development 2019



## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Foreword.....	3
Activities of the UN-IATF-Religion 2019.....	5
Advocacy Highlights .....	5
Capacity Building Highlights .....	6
UNFPA .....	9
UN AIDS .....	12
UN AOC .....	14
UNDP.....	16
UNEP .....	20
UNESCO.....	23
UN Habitat .....	25
UN OHCHR.....	26
UN OSAPG.....	28
WB .....	30

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# Introduction



## The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Actors for Sustainable Development

This report provides an overview of the engagement with faith-based actors and faith-related activities by the UN system members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (short: UN Task Force on Religion/IATF-Religion) covering 2019.

The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development consists of the following members:

- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Chair/Convener
- Joint United Nations Program on HIV/ AIDS (UNAIDS)
- United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- United Nations Department of Public Information and Non-Governmental Organizations (UN DPI NGO)
- United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA)
- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations International Labor Organization (UN ILO)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR)
- United Nations Office of Special Adviser for Prevention of Genocide (UN OSAPG)
- The United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
- World Bank (WB)
- The World Food Program (WFP)
- The World Health Organization (WHO)

## Mission Statement

The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development supports the work of UN staff, towards the shared objective of learned, strategic and sustained engagement with key partners in the faith-based world, to support respective and collective efforts to realize international development goals.

## Objectives

- Provide a knowledge exchange on the intersections of religion and religious actors with the UN system's mandate on human rights, sustainable development and peace and security.
- Provide an internal resource pool on experiences of and lessons from partnerships with FBOs within the UN, as well as with other governmental counterparts.
- Strengthen the integration of reliable FBO partnerships within the UN systems' broader civil society outreach and provide informed policy guidance upon request.

**Activities:** to that end, the Interagency Task Force members shall endeavor to:

- Serve as a convener of multilateral experience and expertise around engagement with religious actors, within the UN and with international intergovernmental counterparts, on the intersections of UN mandated areas with issues of religion and faith, based on diverse UN experiences, evidence and analysis.
- Host policy dialogues with faith-based partners and specialists on religion, development and humanitarian assistance.
- Share tools, guidelines, information and other capacity building resources including strategies of engagement, around ongoing outreach and engagement between diverse UN offices and faith-based NGOs, religious leaders as well as diverse religious institutions.
- Provide quarterly fora ('safe spaces') for the UN system members, to internally reflect on and critically analyze experiences lessons, challenges and best practices gleaned through diverse initiatives with religion and faith-based actors at country, regional and global levels.
- Support and advise UN system members in developing and/or ensuring clarity and consistency in outreach to/with faith-based partners, to systematize and strategically inform the modalities of engagement around different development, peace and security as well as human rights endeavors.
- Seek to catalyze regular UN system-wide activities and initiatives with a view to engaging faith actors in a learned and strategic manner around shared global objectives.

# Foreword



## A letter from Co-Chairs of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides us a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for all countries--both developed and developing--cogent actions in a global partnership. The SDGs recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. The Sustainable Development Goal 17, “strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”, is the thread that weaves through all the interdependent 17 goals with a strategy of bringing together multi-stakeholders through partnerships. It requires that all stakeholders should intensify their efforts and hold each other accountable to ensure that sufficient means and resources of implementation exist to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

As emphasized in SDG17, partnerships are essential to accelerate the present trajectory of the Sustainable Development Goals and to achieve the commitments made by all UN Member States. In 2010, the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion was established. With the specific aims of convening UN system entities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals while taking into consideration the multi-religious dynamics, the UN Interagency Task Force has established a momentum and modality of collaboration with a diverse range of faith-based and faith-inspired partners. Since 2018, 40 CEOs from across the UN system’s long-standing faith-based partners have come together convening the UN Multifaith Advisory Council, which is committed to “uphold multilateralism and international human rights through multi-faith collaboration around/for Agenda 2030”. The UN Multifaith Advisory Council serves as a unique space for convening faith-based partners as advisors to the United Nations, in their human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development efforts.

One significant initiative stewarded by the UN Multifaith Advisory Council is the Kofi Annan Faith Briefings. It was hosted at the Ford Foundation as a side event of the UN High Level Political Forum with the theme, “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: the role of UN and multifaith collaboration”. The Kofi Annan Faith Briefings provide a platform for information, celebration and consultation around partnerships with FBOs directly around the work of the United Nations--for the UN and for multilateralism. The 2019 Kofi Annan Faith Briefings involved a total of 231 scholars, religious actors and government representatives.

2019 witnessed the strenuous efforts from the United Nations and faith-based partners in strengthening these effective multi-stakeholder civil society partnerships, to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is therefore a fitting time to underscore the unwavering commitment of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council. We, as co-chairs representing the UN Multifaith Advisory Council, work with a commitment to serve, to amplify and to uplift faith-inspired civil society advocacy and partnerships with the United Nations for the SDGs. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the members of the UN Interagency Task Force, for their role in ensuring the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

New opportunities are opening up for us. We face a very exciting future.

**On behalf of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council of 2019-2021:**

Mr. Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, Secretary General, ACT Alliance

Ms. Bani Dugal, Principal Representative to the United Nations, Baha'i International Community

Dr. Husna Ahmad, Chief Executive Officer, Global One

Mr. Gopal Patel, Director, The Bhumi Project

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# Activities of the UN-IATF-Religion 2019



The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion's members have continued to jointly engage on key areas of advocacy, capacity building and knowledge management. The work with the over 700+ faith-based NGO partners which the diverse UN system offices have continues at national, regional and global levels.

A synopsis of the key highlights of these joint activities are shared as follows.

## Advocacy Highlights

On July 15, 2019, the Multifaith Advisory Council for the UN Interagency Task Force launched its second annual **Kofi Annan Faith Briefings** on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2019. Entitled "Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality: the Role of UN and Multifaith Collaboration", the Briefings took place as a side event to the 2019 High Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF).

The 2019 Kofi Annan Faith Briefings were organized by UNFPA (the Chair of the UN Interagency Task Force) and co-led together with UNICEF and UNEP, each of whom ensured multi-stakeholder representation and discussions around the main themes of the HLPF: Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Over 196 people participated from UN entities, governments/UN Member States, FBOs, academia and other civil society representatives. The Briefings were co-sponsored by the Missions of Saudi Arabia, Spain, Finland and Denmark, whose Permanent Representatives to the United Nations made interventions at the opening and diverse interactive panels throughout the day. The Briefings were also co-stewarded and moderated by respective CEOs of the Multi-faith Advisory Council. The KAICIID Dialogue Center, whose Secretary General was a co-moderator of the Multi-Faith Advisory Council, were instrumental in securing the representation of UNFPA's former Executive Director and UN Under-Secretary General Dr. Thoraya Obaid, as one of the distinguished keynotes. Dr. Obaid is credited with beginning the work at the UN's N headquarters of systematic engagement with religious actors as part of the cultural fabric and agency, of all communities. Indeed, the UN IATF-Religion was first founded and established under Dr. Obaid's co-stewardship.

The Kofi Annan Faith Briefings concluded that multi-faith collaboration was critical to strengthening the means of implementation and the revitalization of global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17). Whether commemorating the 30 year anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), or speaking to issues of environment and climate change, gender equality, and education, all speakers urged for more systematic seeking and forging of long term multi stakeholder connections with multi-religious partners at local/national, regional and global levels.

Strengthening systematic dialogues and engagement with faith communities as part of civil society, it was argued, was as key to upholding the CRC, as it was to ensuring multi religious advocacy for responsibilities incumbent on all peoples, to implement the SDGs.

The 2019 Kofi Annan Faith Briefings served as a forum for information, celebration and consultation around partnerships between the UN, governments, and FBOs. In so doing, the Briefings serve as a space for upholding the best of what multilateral engagement has to offer, while also ensuring constructive criticism based on informed judgement of actual work taking place in different parts of the globe.

## Capacity Building Highlights

The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion launched the **Asia-Pacific Regional UN Strategic Learning Exchange on Religion and Diplomacy: focus on Development and Humanitarian Partnerships** during November 27-29 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Co- convened with the European Union, together with the UN's faith-based partners<sup>1</sup>, the SLE relied on actual evidence-based discussions informed by case studies submitted by both the UN and the FBOs.

The objective of the SLE is to facilitate peer to peer learning, analysis, and networking. To that end, 84 participants brought together their respective experiences, case studies and perspectives, and assessed these with a view to specific Sustainable Development Goals. Notably SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peaceful, just and inclusive societies and institutions), with SDG 17 (partnerships for sustainable development) as cross-cutting.

The participants reflected on and shared their own initiatives and listened to each other's experiences, comparing, contrasting and thus enhancing their understanding of how partnering between diverse religious actors (religious leaders, faith-based development and humanitarian

<sup>1</sup> Co-sponsoring partners include Universitas Gadjah MADA, Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies Graduate School, Netherlands-Indonesia Consortium for Muslim-Christian Relations, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), ACT Alliance, Kerk in Actie, World Vision, Islamic Relief, the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterfam, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Religions for Peace, and PERSETIA.

NGOs/FBOs, and religious institutions) and (inter-)governmental ones, adds specific value. They also assessed how related risks and challenges may manifest, and means to manage and/or seek to mitigate.

The following are some highlights of the shared learning from the discussions:

- **Interpretation matters.** Participants agreed that “religions” are not harmful per se, but the acceptance and promotion of polarizing religious views and violence in the name of religion are based on certain interpretations of the teachings. There is a trend of misusing religious rhetoric and using teachings selectively to justify discriminatory views and practices based on “religious half-knowledge”. Religious discourse, jurisprudential exegesis or commonly understood cultural interpretations thereof, are critical to the work of/with/about religion.
- **Responsibility of religious leaders.** Generally, religious leaders enjoy high moral respect in the Asia Pacific region and can therefore act as role models to inspire communities and engage with authorities. They also play a key role when it comes to rectifying harmful practices justified on religious grounds (e.g. gender-based violence).
- **Engagement outside our "comfort zone".** It is important for governmental as well as non-governmental actors to engage not just with those religiously inspired actors with whom we share values, but also with those that we consider being the more extreme voices. Being inclusive and culturally sensitive as well as acknowledging different political perspectives is complicated and time-consuming but likely to be worth the effort. The question is whether we are well equipped to engage with the more 'extreme' groups, and how to go about it.
- **"Rediscovery" of religion by governmental and intergovernmental actors.** As 'religious engagement' becomes more topical for (inter)governmental organizations, the question is how to recalibrate the engagement--becoming more systematic and informed about its complexity, the benefits as well the risks of widening the partnerships--while keeping this balanced with other civil society outreach and support.
- **Risk of "commodification" and instrumentalisation of religion.** As religion becomes one of the axes of foreign policy and development praxis, there is a concern that the perceptions and work with "religion" are being perceived as yet another tool in usual policy and planning, thus risking us all to lose touch with the fact that what is being 'worked with', or 'used' ultimately relates to the deepest of human emotions--i.e. people's sense of faith.
- **There is no blanket 'faith-based approach'. Rather, we should opt for 'faith-sensitive approaches'.** There is no one approach which is supposed to cover any and all 'religious' aspects. The latter essentialises the roles, existences, modus operandi, beliefs and realities of different religions, faith, and believers. One needs to consider the role of religions depending on the specific context.
- **Interfaith dialogue and cooperation is growing.** The SLE revealed that many new initiatives are implemented at policy as well as ground level, e.g. Muslim and Christian FBOs exchange practices and approaches in the area of health and child protection. Nevertheless, not all faith-based actors feel comfortable in a multi- stakeholder and interfaith dialogue set up. Some prefer bilateral and discrete approaches (faith to faith or faith to government). The inter-faith approach should not be taken for granted and preferences of diverse faith actors need to be appreciated.
- **Social media** play an important role in the spread of harmful religious narratives. There is a need to make better use of modern and tested communication approaches & tools to foster

dialogue among faith traditions, and to defy constructs of religion which are causing harm. There is a lot of room to spread more "good news stories" to strengthen the positive narratives around the impact of religion.

- **All in all, trust building is key and still requires attention.**

The following publications are available upon request from [peng@unfpa.org](mailto:peng@unfpa.org).

- Report of the 2019 United Nations Kofi Annan Faith Briefings - Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusive and Equality: the Role of UN and Multi-Faith Collaboration.
  - Report of the 2019 United Nations Strategic Learning Exchange on Religion and Diplomacy: Focus on Development and Humanitarian Partnerships.
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# UNFPA

Since 2007 when UNFPA became the first development agency in the UN system to map out its own outreach with faith-based organizations, UNFPA has acknowledged and cherished the legacy of engaging FBOs as civil society agents of changes, which constitutes important guidance as it furthers strategic alliances at national, regional and global levels.

## **The GPS' based Dashboard and Funding to Faith-based Organizations (2014-2019)**

UNFPA has invested in a range of FBOs across the world, all of whom work on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights related issues. To have a better understanding of the organizational investment as well as the nature of its work with faith-based partners at the country and regional levels, in 2019, UNFPA Policy and Strategy Division colleagues created a dashboard to illustrate the analytical results from UNFPA Global Programming System (GPS) data (2014-2019). This dashboard records an important heritage, and points to an ongoing reality with critical cultural agents of change. It effectively provides evidence pointing to the legacy of UNFPA in successfully navigating an apparently contentious environment around religion as/in culture.

## **ACT Alliance Capacity Mapping Project**

As one of the UNFPA's long-term partners, ACT Alliance and UNFPA signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017 for a joint goal of ensuring gender justice. Together, ACT Alliance and UNFPA strengthened their joint focus on working with faith-based actors in communities around the world, to transform the laws, values and behaviors that perpetuate gender inequalities, and to amplify actions and initiatives to achieve gender equality. To match the timeline of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ACT Alliance Capacity Mapping Project has been conducted since 2015 and updated annually, for the purpose of capturing the capacity of both ACT National Forums and ACT Members at country level. According to the data analysis, it is concluded that HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) turn out to be particularly key components when it comes to the humanitarian field of interventions (in this context SGBV refers primarily to sexual violence); and many of the other SRHR activities also

address HIV/AIDS and SGBV (harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, and sexual violence as well).

### **A Roundtable on Religion and Gender: Text, Praxis, and Development Contestations**

On June 14th, 2019, the Amsterdam Center for Religion & Sustainable Development, housed in the VU's Faculty of Theology, initiated a Round Table focused on one of the most contentious intersections of themes—religions and gender, specifically focusing on the Sustainable Development Goal number 5. It was structured to serve as one of the needed “open and protected spaces” for reflection and open critical debate, which can inform the diversity of interlocutors engaged in dealing with the intersectionalities between religion and public life. Centering on the question, “what resources do religious traditions offer in terms of furthering these goals and to what extent do they contain obstacles?” and for the purpose of letting people who engage and embody the religious tradition become agents of emancipation themselves, the distinguished speakers from different perspectives offered their contributions to this topic. During the meeting, it is suggested that we should deliberately create and nurture open and protected space; engage ongoing conversations, encounters and alternative narratives; diversify the base of stakeholders involved, and recognize a wider ways of definition and measurement—in order to provide opportunities to reach a bigger amount of people in a more sustainable and holistic way. Besides, the evidence-based research and analysis which takes into account simultaneously all implications and impact of religion is required.

### **“Keeping the Faith in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights” Session during Nairobi Summit in ICPD @25**

During November 12-14, 2019, the governments of Kenya and Denmark, and UNFPA convened the Nairobi Summit in ICPD 25, to mobilize the political will and financial commitments to finally and fully implement the ICPD Program of Action. During the Nairobi Summit, an amphitheatre session focusing on “Keeping the Faith in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights” convened seven faith leaders who represent different religions from all over the world to reflect the role of religious actors in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights. This session succeeded in raising voices and experiences from diverse religious actors in clear and unequivocal support for the ICPD agenda, particularly for sexual and reproductive health and rights related issues, and showcased the commitments of multi-religious actors to systematically upholding all Nairobi commitments in their advocacy and actions.

### **Memoranda of Understanding between UNFPA and FBOs**

During 2019, UNFPA has signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) and the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI). The purpose of the MoU is to

provide a framework of cooperation in areas of common concern under the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and work together to mobilize stronger rights-based and multifaith-focused engagement, advocacy and action between UNFPA and civil society organizations.

### **UNFPA Regional and Country Offices' Engagement with Faith-based Partners**

UNFPA regional and countries offices also provided their inputs to the Secretary General's Report to the UN General Assembly on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, about their activities undertaken by relevant UN entities to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. They focus on two specific areas: building a framework for commonly shared values to foster social cohesion, and their offices' best practices, innovative partnerships and/or new stakeholders, which help to promote interreligious and/or intercultural collaboration around SRHR, SGBV, Child Marriage, and population and development issues.

### **Publications**

- 2019 United Nations Kofi Annan Faith Briefings “Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusive and Equality: the Role of UN and Multifaith Collaboration” Report.
- UN Strategic Learning Initiative on Religion and Diplomacy: focus on Development and Humanitarian Partnerships Report
- UNFPA Annual Overview Report on Engaging Faith-based Partners 2019 ACT Alliance Capacity Mapping Project final report



# UN AIDS

**Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)** continued through 2019 close collaboration with faith partners involved in the HIV response. The five focus areas for FBO engagement around which activities evolved, were:

- Strengthen FBO leadership and advocacy for the UNAIDS Fast-Track approach;
- Collect, analyse and disseminate data on health care services provided by faith-based health service providers;
- Address stigma and discrimination in communities and health care settings;
- Create demand for service uptake and retention in care;
- Strengthen HIV-related service provision.

Country level activities focus on strengthening the role of the national/local FBOs in the HIV response. Dominating issue in 2019: moving from religions being the source of HIV-related stigma and discrimination towards religious leaders being champions in positive addressing such issues. Several tools in this area were created in order to equip faith partners with evidence and skills.

## **Key global highlights include:**

The International Catholic Migration Commission, the World Council of Churches – Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and UNAIDS, in collaboration with other FBOs and UN agencies, organised a High-Level workshop on Migrants and HIV in Geneva on 20-21 February 2019. The workshop - attended by over 100 participants, including high number of FBOs active in the humanitarian response from all continents - identified key elements of a roadmap to strengthen the engagement of faith-based organisations and expand their role in the response to HIV as well as in providing services for migrants and refugees. As a follow-up, on 5th December 2019 in Kigali, during the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), dozens of African FBOs strategized on how to implement the roadmap in their continent.



On the side-lines of the 74th Session of UNGA high-level segment in New York on 26 September 2019 the World Council of Churches – Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance in collaboration with UNAIDS and PEPFAR organized the Inter-faith Prayer Breakfast under the theme “Communities of faith—helping to find the missing men and seeking justice for children”. The importance of reaching men and the urgent need to ensure that children have access to optimal HIV services are key to end epidemic by 2030.



# UN AOC

The **UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)**, as a political initiative of the UN Secretary General for conflict prevention and conflict resolution, continues its work towards promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue, building bridges of understanding between diverse cultures and addressing the root causes of polarization and violent extremism.

## Highlights

On September 12, the UN Secretary General launched the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites developed by the UNAOC. Work on the Plan started in the aftermath of the Christchurch attacks and was completed in July 2019 after elaborate consultations with a core group of member states, religious leaders, faith-based organizations, UN entities with relevant mandates and other stakeholders. The Plan is rooted in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and grounded in a core understanding: religious sites are powerful symbols of our collective consciousness.

The Plan offers concrete recommendations to support countries in promoting safety of holy sites, ensuring that worshipers can observe their rituals in peace, and fostering the values of compassion tolerance and religious pluralism. The Implementation phase of the Plan starts in 2020 with faith actors playing a key role.

UNAOC was the convener and /or co-organized several meetings that aim at providing a platform for faith-actors to exchange views on means of amplifying the capacity of FBOs in mobilizing the communities towards more inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies:

- Interfaith Harmony Week NY: co-organized a side event with the Permanent Mission of Jordan and UNOCT on Promoting Interfaith Pluralism for Prevention; Global Conference on Human Fraternity UAE: the High Representative delivered remarks in the conference;
- Form Interfaith to Intercivilizational Cooperation for Human Solidarity Vienna: organized by KAICIID and Baku International Center for Interfaith & Intercivilizational Cooperation
- II Baku Summit for Religious Leaders Baku : organized by Baku International Center for Interfaith & Intercivilizational Cooperation
- 10th Assembly for Religions for Peace Lindau : the High Representative launched the Ring of Peace
- Audience with His Holiness Pope Francis in the Vatican Audience with His Eminence Grand

Imam of Al Azhar in Cairo

- Meeting with the Religious Council in Sri Lanka as well as government officials in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka to express the UN solidarity and explore how the UN can help in healing the society and re-building its resilience and cohesion.
- Signed MOUs with NGOs and IGOs with relevant mandates such as : The Global Center for Tolerance and Peace, KAICIID and N. Nazarbayev Center for development of interfaith and intercivilizational dialogue.

**Publications:**

- UN Plan of Action for Safeguarding Religious Sites <https://www.unaoc.org/resource/united-nations-plan-of-action-to-safeguard-religious-sites/>
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# UNDP

## Key highlights

UNDP is a founding member of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers' Core and Advisory Group, and the Global Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes (the “Plan of Action”). Throughout 2019 UNDP continued to support these structures to realise their overall objectives, through programmes in 34 countries aiming to stem the misuse of religion to drive violence and war by protecting human rights, preventing discrimination based on religion or belief, and promoting the freedom to manifest one’s religion or belief as well as by contributing to promoting peace and reconciliation, including in regions marked by religiously motivated violence. For UNDP, FBO and Religious Leaders have been pivotal in developing key concepts of peace and non-violence as they can engage a range of stakeholders in positive dialogue to identify entry points for reconciliation. Partnerships with community leaders of all kinds are critical to UNDP engagement in ending violence, and engagement with faith leaders is proving to be especially effective in realizing objectives that are essential for conflict prevention and peacebuilding—such as communicating a vision of a peaceful, cohesive society that is grounded in local norms (also known as ‘terrorist counternarratives’), and in providing religious counselling to support the effective return and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters, their families and associates.

In 2019, UNDP was also part of the UN inter-agency Task Force that developed the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, launched by the Secretary General in May 2019. The Strategy presents and calls upon the UN family to implement a system-wide programme in order to effectively identify, prevent and confront hate speech, including by targeting its root causes. Recognising that addressing a groundswell of xenophobia, racism and intolerance around the world—including anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred and persecution of Christians—perpetuated by hate speech requires focused advocacy and action, UNDP has developed its own action plan to support implementation of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action. UNDP’s plan focuses on support to three main areas: i) facilitate UN system-wide use of hate speech monitoring and



analysis in programming and policy support; ii) promote implementation of proven effective strategies to counter-hate speech, by sharing examples on UNDP's Global Practitioner Network Community of Practice; and iii) continue and expand existing online platforms—such as #ExtremeLives and Creators of Change—to develop and disseminate arts-based representations of a cohesive, peaceful society aligned with local norms (and the consequences of violent extremism). Note that through private sector partnerships (with Facebook, Google, YouTube), the #ExtremeLives and Creators for Change initiatives have enjoyed a wide audience that promoting empathy towards members of violent extremist groups and improved understanding of the grievances underpinning VE—and have so far been viewed 35 million times.

### **Examples of national and regional activities in support of UNIAT on Religion and Development**

#### **Arab States**

In the Arab States, UNDP is implementing a wide range of regional initiatives to promote inter-faith dialogue, social cohesion and engagement with FBOs. UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States continued strengthening its partnership with KAICIID to cooperate within the framework of a MoU signed in 2016 to support the achievement of SDG 11 and SDG 16, both at the regional level but also in specific countries (Ex: work done jointly with UNDP Iraq on identifying and empowering local agents for social cohesion - “Social Cohesion Champions”).

#### **Ethiopia**

The UNDP Ethiopia Governance and Democratic Participation Programme (GDPP) is a multi-year (June 2017 to December 2021) and multi-stakeholder programme that became operational since July 2017 in response to Government of Ethiopia's request for support and a joint project formulation process. This programme has sought to promote greater voice and participation. In this regard, UNDP supported some key initiatives and critical political dialogue processes that brought together critical stakeholders across the political divide to begin the difficult conversations, namely the National Peace and Reconciliation Conference led by Inter-Faith groups dedicated to peace building and reconciliation, which led to the formulation of a set of recommendations for consideration by the government, as well as by religious institutions.

#### **South Sudan**

With the support of UNDP and within the UNDP's Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC) project which seeks to contribute to the reduction and mitigation of community level conflict and insecurity as well as strengthen community relationships, in August 2019, local communities and authorities of Eastern Lakes and Jonglei states concluded an inter-communal dialogueto resolve conflict between two communities of Jonglei State that disrupted Nile transportation and business. The three day (5-7 August 2019) inter-communal dialogue (Mingkaman dialogue) brought together over 160 members of the communities representing the governors of the two

states, county government authorities, chiefs, religious actors, state-level representatives of Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC), ministers, members of parliament, local peace committee members, youth representatives, and traders who operate along the Sudd swamp. Women were included in the dialogue and two were signatories to the resolutions. The delegates of the Mingkaman dialogue discussed the root causes and drivers of the conflict as well as possible solutions for ensuring peaceful co-existence among the communities.

### **Indonesia**

In 2019 UNDP continued the implementation of the project “Foster tolerant religious education to prevent violent extremism in Indonesia”, in partnership with the State Islamic University. The project activities aim at filling knowledge gap with research on the relevance of religious education and radicalism and influencing stakeholders of religious education to enhance its role for CVE through policy advocacy. Starting in 2018, UNDP conducted a survey of students, teachers and university students’ support for radicalism or radical religious movements, pro-violence ideologies and extremism, and has started to support development of public policies to prevent the spread of certain attitudes and violent behavior, extremism and radicalism in educational institutions, together with the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC).

### **Kosovo**

The two-year EU funded “Inter-Community Dialogue through Inclusive Cultural Heritage Preservation” project implemented by UNDP ended in 2019. It aimed to strengthen inter-community trust and respect for cultural identity and heritage. It does so by engaging all communities in the protection and promotion of Kosovo’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, including through work with municipal officials, citizens, civil society organisations, and religious communities.

### **Bangladesh**

In March 2019 UNDP organized a meeting “Fostering Peaceful and Inclusive Society and the Role of Religious Leaders and Actors” in a hotel in Chattogram. The meeting was jointly organised with the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect in partnership with the Save and Serve Foundation.”, which showed, for instance, that religious actors can play a very important role to foster peace and inclusivity by sharing messages of peace and tolerance and by promoting dialogue between the Rohingya refugees and host communities. The meeting also focused on how the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, developed by the Office on Genocide Prevention, could be implemented in the areas in Cox’s Bazar affected by the Rohingya crisis.

### **Kyrgyz Republic**

Following the ban of religious ceremonies with girls, who have not reached marriageable age, in 2018, UNDP launched a project to prevent early marriages, one component of which aims to involve religious leaders – women and men, in informational campaigns across the country, especially for remote villages. Nowadays, the population very often turns to moldo, imams, atynchas for support and advice, as well as regularly attending Friday prayers and various events at all-female madrasas. Religious leaders everywhere refuse to hold a “nike” (nikah – Marriage in Islam) if the girl has not reached the age of majority, or she does not have a passport.

### **Cameroon**

Mention the PVE programme that includes a component on FBO? Or use the Nigerian Example of the reintegration programme that includes works with community and religious leaders to reduce stigma and mobilise a community effort to reintegrate women and girl returnees into society from Boko Haram?

### **Resources/Publications**

In January 2019 it was launched in Oslo, Norway jointly by UNDP and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) the global study Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Reintegration and Rehabilitation, responding to a pressing need for action-oriented research that improves our understanding of women’s roles in reintegration and rehabilitation processes, and the work of women-led organizations in supporting these processes. Many of the women-led organization are also helping communities deal with violent extremism by supporting counter-narratives that are contextualized in local community. The study considers their experiences as critical lessons for the design and implementation of initiatives to prevent violent extremism. In doing so, it makes an important contribution to an expanding evidence base on the reintegration of violent extremists. The report was launched in conjunction with the launch of Norway’s 2019-2022 National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, with over 200 guests in attendance.

### **Other relevant UNDP resources/publications:**

- [UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders \(2014\)](#)
- [Faith in Finance: Faith-Consistent Investing and the Sustainable Development Goals \(2016\)](#)
- [KAICIID, United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\) Cooperation to Promote Social Cohesion in Arab Region \(2016\)](#)
- [UNDP and Islamic Development Bank Sign Partnership to Support the Sustainable Development Goals \(2016\)](#)



# UNEP

**The UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** key highlights include advancing its flagship initiative launched in 2018: Faith for Earth. The Faith for Earth Initiative has been gaining more prominence and global recognition as a leading partnership network mobilizing actions on environmental issues engaging with faith-based organizations and faith leaders. The number of accredited Faith-based organizations to UN Environment Assembly has increased to 45 giving UNEP-accredited FBOs a voice at the highest international decision making body on the Environment.

The Faith for Earth Interfaith Dialogue was held during the period 11-15 March 2019 as part of the events of the Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly. The Dialogue was organized through 11 sessions involving 63 speakers representing 12 faiths and congregations from all continents of the world. More than 200 faith leaders and representatives of 56 faith-based organizations participated in the dialogue. A synthesis report was published highlighting areas of priorities for faith-based organizations.

The Faith for Earth Initiative participated at the General Assembly of the Partnership on Sustainable Development (PaRD) in Copenhagen 1-3 May 2019. The initiative, with partners, has been able to introduce Environment, Water and Climate Action as a new working stream along with gender, peace and health. UNEP was accepted by the General Assembly to become a UN advisory member. Later on 9-10 December 2019, Faith for Earth, as a co-chair of the work stream, attended a meeting in Vienna to discuss the 2020 work plan and budget.

As part of expanding its Inter-agency work, the Faith for Earth Initiative supported UN-Habitat and co-organized the Interfaith dialogue during the UN-Habitat Assembly on 25 and 27 May 2019. Moreover, the Faith for Earth Initiative participated as a keynote speaker in a number of global webinars organized by the World Council of Churches on Youth and the Environment, With the Joint Learning Initiative on Climate Action, with the World Evangelical Alliance Reflections on the Faith for Earth Dialogue, and with the Parliament of the World's Religions on Climate Action.

Faith for Earth participated in Abrahamic Traditions and Environmental Change Workshop held 23-26 June in Rhodes – Greece. The workshop was organized by the University of Connecticut, AlAkhawayn University and the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale.

Faith for Earth in collaboration with the Vatican, Catholic Youth Network on Environmental sustainability for Africa (CYNESA) and WWF organized the 2nd international conference on Laudato Si 15-16 July 2019 in UNEP premises with the participation of 300 faith and young leaders representing more than 50 countries.

High-profile Roundtable “Inter-confessional Dialogue and SDGs”, was held on 8 July 2019, in Moscow, Russia as part of the implementation of an MOU with the World Congress of Mountain Jews (WCMJ). The roundtable discussion was organized by the WCMJ, an NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC, in partnership with UNEP Moscow office. The event was attended by prominent representatives of various religious confessions, renowned political figures, members of the local artistic, scientific and business communities.

Faith for Earth represented by UNEP’s India office addressed the “Greening the Globe for Sustainable Living” Conference held 1-4 August 2019 in Chennai. During the conference, 380 participants, 14 Schools and 13 colleges screened the documentary “How Green we are?”. Most of the participants were from rural areas and it was their first time to attend such an international conference. The conference included 25 invited speeches and 80 Reviewed Research papers.

Faith for Earth is continuing its partnership with the Islamic Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). The 8th Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in Rabat on 2-3 October 2019 adopted a strategy on the activation of cultural and religious factors in protecting the environment to achieve sustainable development in the Islamic world. The conference also adopted the guidelines on strengthening the role of youth and civil society in the protection of the environment. The Faith for Earth Initiative reiterated in a keynote speech the importance of such strategies in enhancing the role of the Islamic Nations in contributing to the global efforts in mobilizing all sectors of the community to live sustainably according to their faith beliefs.

The Faiths for Forests campaign was officially launched as a contribution to the UN Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit, kicking off a global faith-based movement of mobilization, education and advocacy around halting and reversing tropical deforestation. The site of the Campaign contains a new library of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) educational materials that have been developed with partners. It also has access to educational materials for religious leaders and faith communities on forests – issue primers, country fact sheets and faith toolkits.



Faith for Earth presented on Climate Change and its Impacts on Women and Religious groups at the expert consultation meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), Gender Equality and the SDGs that was held in Copenhagen on 7-8 October 2019 with the participation of faith leaders, scholars, UN organizations and academia. The process is sponsored by Denmark and Norway, and organized in cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development, Stefanus Alliance and the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

Faith for Earth was at the center of discussions of the consultation meeting that was held on 8th and 9th of October 2019, in Skálholt Iceland. Bishops and religious leaders from the Nordic countries, U.S. and Canada also attended. The participants discussed the role of faith, spirituality and religious belief in tackling the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. The participants agreed that a “Faith for Earth Coalition” would allow faith leaders to set shared objectives in addressing climate change and environmental degradation. The meeting was organized by the United Nations Association in Iceland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI), the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, the Institute of Religion and Reconciliation and Theological Institute, University of Iceland. It was sponsored by the ELCI, the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources in Iceland and UNEP’s Faith for Earth Initiative.

Faith for Earth addressed the symposium on water in times of climate crisis held in Amsterdam on 6-7 November 2019. The symposium was hosted by the Vrije Universiteit & the Ecumenical Patriarchate in close collaboration with Amsterdam Centre for Religion & Sustainable Development, UNEP, the cities of Amsterdam, Cape Town, and Jakarta, partners from business, religion, government, NGOs and the Amsterdam International Water Week.

As part of the Learning Exchange series of the UN Task Force on Religion and Development, Faith for Earth held a Capacity Development workshop in Nairobi during the period 17-19 December 2019. Around 50 participants, half of them were UN staff and the other half representing 8 religions from 4 continents. The Overall Goal was “To develop the capacities of United Nations staff and partner faith-based organizations to capitalize on the intrinsic relationship between faith and religious beliefs and environmental sustainability”.



# UNESCO

**The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, with the support of the Government of Azerbaijan, hosted the Third Academic Forum of the UNESCO-UniTwin Network of UNESCO Chairs on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding (May 2019), focusing on the inter-related questions of inter-religious dialogue and the governance of religious diversity. The Forum brought together different perspectives to examine the vexing question of how religious diversity is being approached and governed at a time of salient hyper security and growing levels of interconnectedness, questions that are pertinent at the level of individuals as well as national identity debates and how these debates are situated in the context of secularism, democracy and human rights.

Key conclusions included the need to widen interreligious dialogue to include different types of religious actors, moving beyond engagement with just religious leaders; diversify the languages and narratives when engaging with religious and faith based actors who are genuinely and authentically inclusive; and to strengthen interreligious dialogues between young people, focusing in particular on online engagement.

As well as strengthening the mobilization of the UNESCO-UniTwin Network within the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development, the Network also agreed to work on a compendium of innovative good practices in the field of community-level interreligious dialogues. This compendium will bring together salient narratives/practices of interreligious/interfaith dialogues from diverse corners of the world.

The idea is to map the dynamic and innovative dimensions of interreligious and interfaith dialogue that continue to evolve in diverse cultures and regions. New and creative forms of interfaith dialogue are being practiced across cultures to assuage religious disaffection and promote interconnectedness.

It will serve as a timely response to the growing interest of the international community to explore the positive role of religion in conflict and peace. Work on the compendium will

commence in 2020, and it is hoped that the involvement of other UN entities can be assured.



# UN Habitat

**The UN Habitat** hosted several inter-faith dialogue sessions at its 1st UN-Habitat Assembly

During the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 27 to 31 May 2019, UN-Habitat convened two Inter-faith dialogue sessions to provide an inclusive platform where faith leaders and faith-based organizations interact with people from around the world attending the Assembly to share thoughts on their role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda.

A central commitment of the SDGs is to ‘Leave no one behind’ and to endeavour to ‘reach the furthest behind first’. This means that the 17 Goals and their targets need to be met for all segments of society. In essence, it calls for a more inclusive approach to development that ensures the voices of the poorest and most marginalized groups are heard and that their active participation as agents of change is promoted.

UN-Habitat recognizes that Faith-based actors play a crucial role in human and sustainable development. The respect and public trust earned over several decades of engagement with governments, local communities and other key actors has exceptionally placed and equipped religious communities and faith-based actors to play a critical role in promoting the inclusion of different groups, offering peaceful channels for conflict resolution, upholding the human rights of the most vulnerable, among others.

The two sessions attended by religious leaders from diverse backgrounds and faith-based organizations provided a unique opportunity for UN-Habitat to listen to perspectives of religious leaders and faith-based organizations on how best it can put People, Prosperity, Planet and Peace at the centre of its work in promoting inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities where no one and no place is left behind. They also provided a clear roadmap for a structured and long-term partnership between UN-Habitat and faith-based actors in the delivery of its work programme.



# UN OHCHR

**The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** has continued using the “Faith for Rights” framework in engaging with faith-based actors. This framework provides space for a cross-disciplinary reflection and action on the deep connections between religions and human rights. The objective is to foster the development of peaceful societies, which uphold human dignity and equality for all and where diversity is not just tolerated but fully respected and celebrated.

OHCHR has used the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights” for training and advocacy purposes with religious minority groups, civil society organizations and United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. For example, OHCHR organized workshops in Tunis, Marrakesh and Bangkok, on the role of youth as agents of change in building societies based on respect for freedoms of religion or belief, expression and peaceful assembly.

OHCHR also co-organized side events at the Forum on Minority Issues (“Telling human rights stories of minorities”) and at the Human Rights Council (on freedom of religion or belief, gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals). In addition, OHCHR focused on the protection of religious minorities by organizing a regional workshop in Tunis in October 2019, on enhancing civic space and addressing hate speech in social media in the Middle East and North Africa.

In December 2019, OHCHR organized another expert workshop to refine human rights education and training material for faith actors. The resulting #Faith4Rights toolkit is a prototype suggested for faith actors, academic institutions and training experts, to be further enriched and adapted to the various inter-faith engagement contexts. This methodology of engagement on faith and rights is designed to be appropriated by faith actors. The toolkit may also be implemented through information technology and social media, with a particular focus on the needs of youth. The toolkit contains 18 modules, mirroring each of the commitments on “Faith for Rights”.



These modules offer concrete ideas for peer-to-peer learning exercises, for example how to unpack the 18 commitments, share personal stories, search for additional faith quotes or provide for inspiring examples of artistic expressions. The annex proposes several cases to debate, which expand the thematic scope of the training, illustrate the intersectionality of the 18 commitments and enhance the skills of faith actors to manage real life situations towards the shared aims of “Faith for Rights”.

The whole concept is interactive, result-oriented and conducive to critical thinking. It is open for adaptation by facilitators in order to tailor the modules to the specific context of the participants.

The “Faith for Rights” framework continues to be quoted and used by faith-based actors and civil society organizations. For example, the G20 Interfaith Forums in Buenos Aires and Osaka yielded the policy recommendation to reduce incitement to hatred by supporting religious leaders and faith-based actors in fulfilling their human rights responsibilities as summarized in the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments. Also referring to the Beirut Declaration, the Global Forum on Faith Action for Children on the Move called in its action plan for designing and implementing projects and initiatives aimed at promoting respect for and understanding of minority groups, including those with different beliefs, faiths and religions, to reduce violence, xenophobic narratives and nurture peaceful societies.

Furthermore, the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process organized in October 2019 a “Faith for Rights” seminar in Nicosia, discussing the role that faith communities can play in combatting human trafficking and supporting victims. In November 2019, Arigatou International published a multi-religious study entitled “Faith and Children’s Rights”, which also draws upon the Beirut Declaration.

At the seventh meeting of the Istanbul Process on Combating Intolerance, held in The Hague in November 2019, several speakers referred to the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of incitement to hatred and the “Faith for Rights” framework. In thematic and mission reports, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has called upon States to use them as a chart of specific commitments and practical measures to address the related phenomena of incitement to religious hatred, discrimination and violence. In his report on combating antisemitism, the Special Rapporteur also referred to them as soft law instruments that can provide essential guidance for strategies to combat antisemitism and other forms of intolerance.

#### Publications:

- Report and outlook on “Faith for Rights” (November 2019):  
[www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Faith4Rights.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Faith4Rights.pdf)
- #Faith4Rights toolkit (December 2019):  
[www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx)



# UN OSAPG

OSAPG organized various events in 2019 under the framework of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes (henceforth referred to as The Plan of Action).

In March 2019, OSAPG organized in New York an expert workshop on “The role of religious leaders and actors in preventing polarization, building bridges and fostering inclusivity in countries with emerging or ruling populist parties.” The workshop was in partnership with the IATF for Religion and Development (UNFPA and UNDP) and with WCC, KAICIID and JTS. The outcome of the workshop will be a publication of the presentations by all the speakers.

In the same month, during CSW, OSAPG in collaboration with the IATF (UNFPA, UNAIDS and UNWOMEN in particular) organized a side event titled “Preventing gender-based violence: the role of religious actors”. This event examined the role that religious leaders and actors and faith-based organizations can play in preventing, countering and addressing gender-based violence, and its incitement in peace and conflict situations. Speakers included representatives from religious institutions and FBOs. Good practices and lessons-learned were highlighted.

At the end of March, OSAPG held a workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on the Plan of Action and as part of a program titled “Fostering Peaceful and Inclusive Societies: the Role of Religious Education”. This program focused on how religious education can help to uphold the concepts of pluralism, respect for diversity and inclusive citizenship. The workshop was implemented in Bangladesh with the support of UNDP and the Save and Serve Foundation and was attended by some 75 participants from various secular and religious education institutions. As a result of this meeting, the Save and Serve Foundation is now developing in partnership with UNESCO an interfaith publication on religious education with focus on pluralism, respect for diversity and inclusive citizenship. The first Bangladesh Interfaith Council was also established and launched in October 2019. Additional meetings under this program are planned in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe in 2020.

In May 2019, the UN Special Adviser on Genocide Prevention, Mr. Adama Dieng, was invited to speak at a conference organized by the Vatican, at the Vatican City, on the Sustainable Development Goals. In his speech, Mr. Dieng stressed the essential role of the UN IATF on Religion and Development to bring together 21 UN entities on issues related to the three pillars of the United Nations.

In June 2019, the UN SG launched the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and appointed his Special Adviser on genocide Prevention, Mr. Adama Dieng, to be UN focal point for the implementation thereof. In this context, the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) is currently providing support to UN field entities to develop national level plans of action on hate speech. UN entities which are part of the UN Working Group on Hate Speech are also developing entity-specific action plans on hate speech in line with the UN Strategy. Working Group members have been requested to submit to the OSAPG their entity-specific action plans on hate speech by the end of 2019. The OSAPG will be the repository of these plans of action, to ensure the alignment with international human rights standards.

As part of the implementation of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, OSAPG plans to hold early 2020 a roundtable with tech and social media companies to discuss collaboration on the implementation of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. OSAPG is also finalizing the recruitment of a consultant to develop detailed guidelines for the use of UN field presences (Resident Coordinators and head of Peace Missions/Special Political Missions). The consultant will start work at the beginning of January 2020 and the guidelines are expected to be finalized at the end of the first quarter of 2020.

In addition, in collaboration with UNESCO, OSAPG also developed the concept note for the inter-ministerial conference on education with a focus on hate speech, as requested by the Secretary-General. The inter-ministerial conference, which is foreseen for the second half of 2020 in New York, will be preceded by an expert meeting to take place in Paris during the first half of 2020.



**THE WORLD BANK**

## **WB**

The **World Bank (WB)** has collaborated with faith-based actors over the years to join forces in the fight against extreme poverty. In 2019, the Bank fostered collaboration with faith actors to advance shared development priorities, notably around the Human Capital Project (HCP), Women & Youth, Adaptation & Resilience, and Fragility, Conflict & Violence. The World Bank's revamped faith engagement strategy focuses on deepening engagement with a diverse group of faith-based organizations and religious leaders that share in the Bank's mission of eradicating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Highlights of the Bank's 2019 engagement with faith actors include the following:

### **Advocacy: The World Bank strengthened strategic dialogue with FBOs to advance shared priorities**

During the 2019 Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the IMF, the Bank convened a high-level roundtable with faith leaders and WBG management to discuss The Role of Faith in the Human Capital Project. The roundtable brought together 60 high-level faith-based actors and representatives from 33 organizations. The roundtable facilitated a dialogue between high-level stakeholders on the human capital investments needed to achieve sustainable economic progress and also provided a platform for knowledge sharing on the impact of faith-based organization work on Human Capital Project related sectors.

During the 2019 Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group and the IMF, the Bank convened a similar roundtable to discuss The Role of Faith in Building Social and Economic Inclusion to Advance Sustainable Country-Level Outcomes in Fragile Contexts. The roundtable convened 70 high-level faith-based actors and representatives from 38 organizations. The faith event provided an opportunity to engage high-level faith-based actors in a discussion on their role in financial inclusion for women and youth and how partnerships are critical in advancing the development goals in fragile context.

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**Relationship Building: The Bank strengthened relations with FBOs and fostered increased understanding of the role of FBOs in development**

More than 20 FBOs provided valuable input into the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy during the first phase consultation process.

The Bank facilitated 35 meetings with new faith stakeholders to explore potential opportunities to engage around shared priorities.

The Bank engaged FBOs and faith actors through the following platforms:

- **Moral Imperative:** Facilitated monthly meetings with the Steering Committee that informed faith engagement plans. This group was initially convened by the Bank in April 2015 to launch an initiative of more than 40 diverse faith leaders to support the Bank's goals. Learn more here: [Ending Extreme Poverty: A Spiritual and Moral Imperative](#)
- **United Nations (UN) Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development:** As a member of the UN interagency task force on religion and the Steering Committee, the Bank met regularly with FBOs affiliated with all UN registered religions to advance the SDGs.
- **International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD):** The Bank is a member of the Steering Group of PaRD, an organization that brings together more than 100 governmental and intergovernmental entities to engage with CSOs and FBOs on the SDGs.

**Evidence Building: The World Bank collaborated with various partners to build a body of evidence around shared priorities**

The Bank conducted an FBO mapping exercise in the DRC and will use the data to inform future engagement around key development priorities.

**Operations: The World Bank strengthened understanding of the Bank's operations among several FBOs**

The World Bank's faith team led a mission to DRC, where consultations were held with FBO and CSO leaders to inform the Bank's Faith Strategy and DRC Country Partnership Framework, as well as conduct a mapping exercise to inform the implementation plans.

FBO and CSO representatives participated in a four-day field visit to Senegal and The Gambia. The trip was organized by the Bank to give participants an opportunity to see first-hand the impact of the Bank's work in two IDA countries.

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