



2021 Annual Report

United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development

Engaging with Religion and Faith-based Actors on the 2030 Sustainable
Development Agenda

Membership of UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development(UNIATF) 2021



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 during the year 2021. None of the opinions expressed here reflect those of the United Nations system, its member entities, Governing Board(s) or territory/territories.

Table of Contents

Introduction of UN IATF-Religion and Sustainable Development	1
Joint Activities of the UNIATF in 2021	2
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).....	5
Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG)	8
The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS).....	10
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)	12
United Nations Development Program (UNDP).....	14
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).....	27
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women).....	28
United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)	31
United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).....	37
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).....	39
World Bank Group (WBG)	41
World Health Organization (WHO).....	43
Annex I: List of the UN Interagency Task Force Members 2021	46
Annex II: Multifaith Advisory Council Membership 2021	47
Annex III: UNIATF ToR.....	49
Annex IV: MFAC ToR 2021	52
Annex V: TORs Chairs of MFAC to the UNIATF-R	55
Annex VI: MFAC Report 2021	57
Annex VII: IATF FBO Database TORs	65

Introduction of UN IATF-Religion and Sustainable Development

The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (UN IATF-R) was established in 2010, at the behest of eight UN principals, as a platform for knowledge exchange and management, capacity building, system-wide guidance and oversight regarding engagement with faith-based/-inspired civil society actors. Since 2010, the UNIATF has established a momentum and modality of collaboration with a diverse range of faith-based/-inspired civil society partners.

The UN IATF-R has grown considerably over the past years and currently brings together 27 UN entities from across the system who meet on a regular basis and co-organize joint advocacy and capacity-building activities. It is encouraging to note the increased interest among UN-System partners in faith-related engagement, including in talking on coordination and leadership roles in support of the UN-System's work in engaging faith-based organizations and networks. [*The list of the UNIATF whole membership can be found in Annex I: List of the UN Interagency Task Force Members 2021.*]

As of 2020, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) joined force with UNFPA - who until then had been the core convener of the IATF-R to serve as the IATF's Co-Chairs. The new mechanism foresaw a rotation between the three entities in holding the Executive Secretariat functions, with UNFPA starting in 2020.

Throughout the years, the UN IATF on Religion and Sustainable Development also worked closely with the Multifaith Advisory Council(MFAC), which was established in 2018 by the UN IATF-R and composed of CEOs or designated representatives thereof from across the UN system's long-term faith-based/-inspired civil society partners. Currently, the MFAC has 38 members.

For the period 2020-2022, two UN entities co-chair the UN IATF. A third UN entity serves as executive secretariat. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) provided support as executive secretariat. In 2021, UNAOC and UNFPA served as co-Chairs. OSAPG provided support as executive secretariat. In 2022, UNFPA and OSAPG will serve as co-Chairs. UNAOC will provide support as executive secretariat.

In 2021, the IATF proceeded with the renewal of approximately one third of the MFAC members, as per the MFAC ToRs. The Bahu Trust, the Center for Earth Ethics, the Lutheran World Federation and Soka Gakkai International joined the MFAC in 2021. Subsequently, and also in accordance with the MFAC ToRs, new four co-Chairs for 2022 were elected by MFAC members in 2021: Bhumi Global, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and World YWCA.

Joint Activities of the UNIATF in 2021

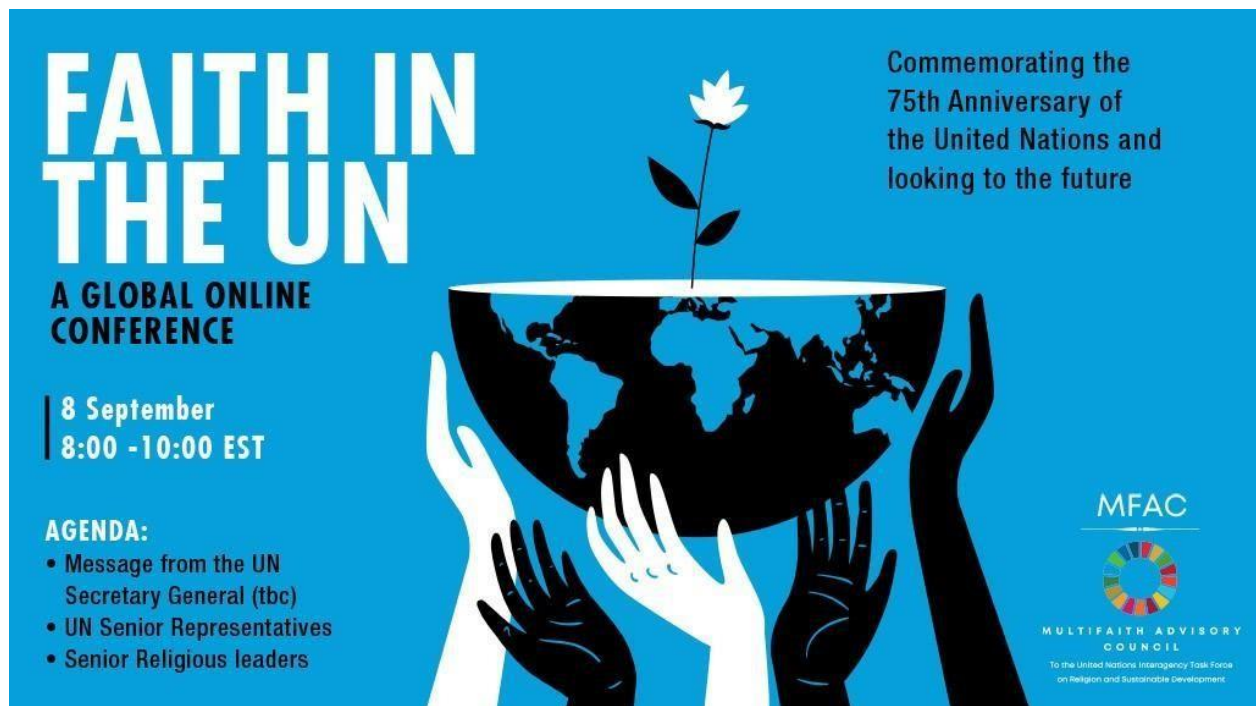
Despite the significant challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, the UN IATF-R continued to engage faith partners in knowledge sharing, system-wide guidance and oversight in the area of religion and development, and joint advocacy.

For the greater part of 2021, most of the UN system continued to work remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the year, the UN IATF-R chairs organized three virtual meetings with the whole membership of the UN IATF-R, and eleven virtual meetings were held between UN IATF-R and MFAC's co-chairs. One meeting with the whole membership of the UN IATF-R and MFAC also took place. In addition, in 2021 the Co-chairs of the UN IATF-R finalized the rotation of the MFAC members and of Co-chairs based on the revised 2020 MFAC' ToRs.

In follow up to the [Joint Statement with the Endorsement of the Multifaith Advisory Council](#) on the COVID-19 pandemic, collaboration among UN entities and faith-based organizations continued to be strengthened in 2021. This collaboration materialized through the implementation of the [Global Pledge for Action by Religious Actors and Faith-Based Organizations to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic in Collaboration with the United Nations](#). In this context, UNAOC, OSAPG and OHCHR organized six webinars on issues related to UN-FBOs collaboration in the common fight against the COVID-19 pandemic (minority rights, hate speech, interfaith dialogue, protecting religious sites, gender and atrocity prevention).

The [UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19](#) developed by the UN Sustainable Development Group, providing guidance for the Resident Coordinators and the UN Country Teams in the UN's efforts on the ground, specifically recognizes the importance of leveraging the UN's networks and partnerships to bring together representatives of state institutions with a wide range of non-state actors, including faith-based organizations and religious leaders, to co-create recovery strategies and strengthen social cohesions through whole-of-society approaches.

The MFAC with support from the UN IATF-R, held the [Global Online Conference “Faith in the UN: Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations and looking to the future”](#). The event aimed to reflect upon the systematic support from faith-based and faith-inspired actors to the UN system in upholding the shared values of human rights and in promoting sustainable development. Participants included UN principals, goodwill ambassadors, Member States and youth representatives along with the whole membership of UN IATF-R and MFAC. This event reaffirmed the shared value of multilateral collaboration and partnership with faith-based/-inspired civil society actors, which is more pertinent than ever in the current situation.



In 2021, the IATF and MFAC Co-Chairs organized the first of a series of substantive meetings between IATF and MFAC to address key topics for collaboration between IATF and MFAC. The meeting, which took place in November, addressed UN-FBO collaboration to advance Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, with the objective to identify challenges to the advancement of gender equality and women empowerment in faith settings, the needs for support to this workstream, and to solicit recommendations to address these needs. The meeting was attended by over 40 representatives and was held in accordance with Chatham House Rules, with the aim of creating a safe and enabling space for an open exchange of views. Participants identified several challenges related to working on the issue of gender equality and in engaging with UN and FBOs, as well as strategies to improve collaboration were proposed.

Responding to the need to foster information-sharing and cooperation between IATF members, and under the lead of UNFPA, a database of FBO partners was developed in 2021. The database is intended to be a live document, where the contact details of key FBO partners of IATF members are collected - with inputs by the FBOs themselves, who are able to input their information directly into the matrix. All focal points of IATF members are able to access the document at their convenience, while UNFPA maintains the ownership and supervision of the document, in its

capacity as IATF Co-Chair.

In December 2020, the MFAC held its second Retreat in a virtual format. This two-day retreat included participation from the entire UN IATF-R membership to all discussion sessions. Prior to the retreat, the MFAC presented to the IATF-R a summary report of its work in 2020, along with the reports produced by its Working Groups on Gender, Climate Change, UN 75th Anniversary, and COVID-19. [The reports from UN MFAC can be found [here](#)] The retreat provided an opportunity to assess the extent to which the UNIATF-MFAC partnership has achieved its objectives, identify good practices and lessons learned, as well as possible gaps and challenges. It also offered a space for exploring potential and concrete areas of collaboration between the UN IATF-R and MFAC going forward. During the retreat, the following decisions were made:

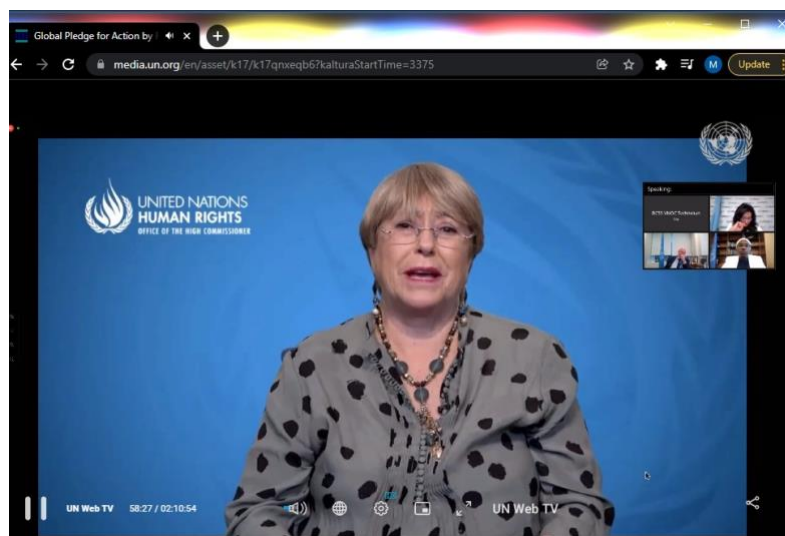
- Extend the mandates of UN 75th and COVID-19 Working Groups, and to continue the work of the UN 75th Working Group by renaming it Multilateral Working Group;
- Keep the momentum set by the retreat by holding small-scale Kofi Annan Faith Briefings during the year of 2021;
- Broaden the scope of participation to include the work of faith groups outside of the MFAC membership;
- Revise the MFCA ToR with a view to strengthen the section on selection of new members and on principles of partnerships.
- The UN IATF-R continued to be chaired by UNAOC, OSAPG and UNFPA. In 2021, OSAPG served as Executive Secretariat of the UN IATF-R.



Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued engaging with religious leaders and faith-based actors in the context of the “**Faith for Rights**” framework.¹ It 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.

In 2021, OHCHR collaborated with the Office of the Special Advisor on Prevention of Genocide and the UN Alliance of Civilizations for a peer-to-peer learning programme on the **Global Pledge for Action** by Religious Actors and Faith-Based Organizations to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic in Collaboration with the United Nations.² The monthly webinars focused on topics related to religious or belief minorities, hate speech, atrocity crimes, religious sites, gender equality and interfaith dialogue.³ At the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2021, High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet underlined the importance of inclusive peer-to-peer learning on faith and human rights because releasing the world from incitement to national, racial or religious hatred could unleash tremendous potential.⁴ In follow-up to the Global Pledge for Action, several recommendations emanated with regard to addressing hate speech and protecting religious or belief minorities.⁵ They stressed that the United Nations brings an important normative human rights framework, soft-law standards and peer-to-peer learning methodology to engage with religious actors on issues of faith and human rights. Furthermore, social media platforms should explicitly include human rights into their policies and recalibrate business models that are benefiting from hate with little incentive to tackle it. Moreover, political manipulation of religion should be analysed to manage this phenomenon that exacerbates hate speech. It is also recommended to support interfaith dialogue initiatives and to engage in peer-to-peer learning to further the fight against hate speech, xenophobia, stigmatization and discrimination, in a bottom-up approach to change attitudes in a sustainable mode.



¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/GlobalPledgeAction.pdf>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/GlobalPledgeActionConcept.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27279&LangID=E>

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/GlobalPledgeRecommendations.pdf>

Furthermore, OHCHR has piloted the interactive methodology and case studies of the **#Faith4Rights toolkit**,⁶ including with civil servants in Brazil and Nigeria (with the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief), judges in Indonesia (with the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights and the Institute for an Independent Judiciary) and with several universities as well as Chevening scholars from more than 60 countries. UN human rights mechanisms have been part and parcel of these webinars, notably the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights as well as members of the Human Rights Committee and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

OHCHR, UNWOMEN, UN Population Fund and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities/Sexual Violence Research Initiative also conducted webinars that resulted in peer-to-peer learning snapshots on the role of **religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief literacy**.⁷ In addition, OHCHR and the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships held peer-to-peer learning events on using the #Faith4Rights toolkit in the context of the European Union Gender Action Plan III, which calls the EU to support mobilisation of religious actors for gender equality in line with the "Faith for Rights" framework.⁸ Furthermore, a series of monthly high-level dialogues on freedom of religion or belief and the **Sustainable Development Goals** was conducted with parliamentarians and faith-based actors, co-organized together with the Freedom of Religion or Belief Leadership Network, International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, African Parliamentarians Association for Human Rights, and Religions for Peace. In addition, four online events together with the non-governmental organization Freemuse examined the nexus between visual, performing and other arts, human rights of minority communities, and the evolving impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on these.⁹ Moreover, a group of former OHCHR Minority Fellows and the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues remotely recorded a music video on the rights of persons belonging to minorities, which was premiered during the UN Social Forum in October 2021.¹⁰

Addressing the **G20 Interfaith Forum** in Bologna, the High Commissioner noted that thematic forums, such as the Forum on Minority Issues and Social Forum, could contribute to widening civic space, promoting mutual understanding and enriching governmental deliberations with grass-roots contributions.¹¹ Previous G20 Interfaith Forums had also recommended that G20 countries should support the UN-based initiative 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 the 18 commitments of the "Faith for Rights" program.

OHCHR expanded its **work on anti-Semitism**, including through cooperation with the World Jewish Congress in the context of exhibitions and panel discussions. On the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust (27 January 2021), the High Commissioner issued a press statement in which she stressed that 2020 had seen frightening increases in the number of hate crimes in many societies, and a sharp rise in online anti-Semitic

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/faith4rights-toolkit.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/P2Psnapshots27052021.pdf>

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0017&from=EN>, p. 3.

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FrameworkInAction.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/SForum/Pages/SForum2021.aspx>

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27442&LangID=E>

activity amid the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the World Jewish Congress reporting a 30 per cent increase in anti-Jewish slurs on major social media sites since November 2019.¹²

The **Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief** recommended in his report on countering Islamophobia/anti-Muslim hatred that States fulfil their obligations to prohibit any advocacy of religious hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, in line with international norms and soft law instruments developed under the auspices of the United Nations, explicitly referring to Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, the Rabat Plan of Action and the Beirut Declaration on “Faith for Rights”.¹³

At the regional level, OHCHR’s **Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa** published, in partnership with the Office of the Special Advisor on Prevention of Genocide, a booklet in Arabic and English on engaging religious actors to counter hate speech, prevent incitement to violence, and build inclusive and peaceful societies. The Regional Office also supported an initiative to develop a code of conduct for parliamentarians in Lebanon, which encourages them to sign on to a pledge to combat incitement to hatred and discrimination and to avoid using pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group, based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

At the country level, OHCHR’s **Tunisia Country Office** continued engaging in a constructive and fruitful dialogue with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Union of Tunisian Imams, in order to involve religious actors in advancing human rights in the country and thereby contribute to building Tunisia’s sustainable development. Programmes were initiated aiming at developing human rights capacities and skills of worship professional staff in order to support their specific role and responsibilities in combating discrimination, hate speech and violence based on religion or belief. The close partnership and trust established with these key national partners have created a model of dialogue and meaningful participation in the protection of Imams as well as male and female preachers.

Publications:

- Report and outlook on “Faith for Rights” (June 2021):
www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Faith4Rights.pdf
- #Faith4Rights toolkit (December 2021):
www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/faith4rights-toolkit.pdf

¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26689&LangID=E>

¹³ See [A/HRC/46/30](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26689&LangID=E), para. 79 (d).

Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG)

In 2021, the **Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG)** continued to implement the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors [to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes](#) and the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

In March 2021, OSAPG hosted with UNDP the event on Preventing Atrocity Crimes: the role of countering and addressing hate speech to raise awareness about the importance of addressing and countering hate speech as a way to build societies resilient to the risk of violence. This event was part of the “UNDP Development dialogues: rethinking solutions to crisis in the decade of action”.

In March 2021, OSAPG, jointly with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, organized a three-day webinar on “Nurturing peaceful, respectful and inclusive societies in Pakistan: Seeracounters hate speech through decisive action”. This series of introductory webinars brought together political, religious and community leaders as well as students and faculty staff from more than 200 universities in Pakistan. The webinars, that were open by the President of Pakistan included participants from different minority groups in the country. It resulted in a series of recommendations on how addressing and countering hate speech can be incorporated in the school curriculum in Pakistan.

End of June 2021, the Special Adviser on Genocide Prevention participated in the [High-level Conference on Counter-Terrorism](#).¹⁴ In the session dedicated to “the critical roles of civil society and local actors in building partnerships for prevention”, she highlighted the importance of addressing and countering hate speech in line with international human rights standards to contribute to prevention of violent extremism strategies.

On 7 July 2021, OSAPG, the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), organized a virtual event during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to celebrate the [Global Pledge for Action](#) by Religious Actors and Faith-based organizations to address the Covid-19 pandemic. Experiences of faith-based actors’ engagement at the grassroots level in the fight against the pandemic and its impacts have been shared particularly hate speech and its ramifications.

On 26 October 2021, OSAPG organized the Inter-ministerial conference on addressing hate speech through education, jointly with UNESCO. The conference was convened by the UN Secretary-General and chaired by the President of Namibia and UNESCO’s Director General. It was preceded by the online [Multi-stakeholder Forum](#) organized by OSAPG and the UNESCO on 30 September 30^h – 1 October. This Forum brought together government representatives, renowned scholars, teachers/educators, youth and human rights experts, technology companies and artists to unpack the role of education vis-à-vis the hate speech phenomenon to inform the Inter-ministerial

¹⁴ More information on the 2021 Counter-Terrorism Week, <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/2021-counter-terrorism-week>.

Conference. The latter resulted in the [Conclusions by the Conference Chairs](#) that focused on the importance of building partnerships with all relevant stakeholders including religious and faith-based organizations through a whole-of-society approach was highlighted in order to better address and counter hate speech through education. OSAPG is currently implementing this document.

In 2021, OSAPG also continued to provide support to UN field entities in the context of its UN focal point responsibility to implement the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. Among others, UNCTs in Costa Rica, Kenya, Bosnia and Herzegovina developed plans of action on hate speech in 2021 with OSAPG's support. In this same vein, it developed a Guidance Note on Gender-based Hate speech that will be published in 2022. OSAPG also continued to engage with tech and social media companies on the implementation of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on hate Speech, including on issues related to Holocaust and genocide Denial.

Finally, OSAPG launched a series of consultations with traditional leaders on their role and responsibility on preventing atrocity crimes and their incitement. These consultations will result into a Plan of Action on this subject.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS)

Within the Strategic Framework – Partnership with Faith-based Organizations – recognizing the key role of faith partners in the HIV response, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) continued through 2021 the fruitful collaboration with religious leaders, FBOs and faith communities at country, regional and global levels.

- The Inter-Faith Health Platform (IFHP) further strengthened the engagement of FBOs in the HIV response through different inter-faith initiatives, with special focus on spirituality, mental health, and resilience during the time of dual HIV and COVID19 pandemics; the role of faith communities in strengthening adolescent peer groups; Framework for Dialogue and stigma reduction interventions; and people left behind in the context of COVID19. The IFHP is continually populated with new resources on HIV, to which members have free access. It also contains best practices by faith partners engaged in the response. Around 2,300 participating individuals and organizations receive regular updates on issues related to HIV¹⁵.
- In follow-up to the Vatican hosted high-level dialogue on pediatric HIV, three national, government-hosted multi-stakeholder consultations on pediatric HIV and TB in children living with or exposed to HIV were organized in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire and Kenya. They mobilized a wide range of national and international partners and resulted in the adoption of pediatric action plans. Faith health care providers and faith groups actively participated in the preparatory meetings and consultations themselves. The consultations built on similar events held to develop the [Rome Action Plan](#) and aimed to complement commitments to scale up the Action Plan. The consultations also promoted greater coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders at the country level. The stakeholder commitments provided the means to track regular reporting on their actions to improve pediatric HIV initiatives.
- The Faith Initiative on HIV/AIDS that involves several global and regional FBOs successfully organized a series of high-level advocacy events around the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS in June 2021, promoting the best practices of faith partners in the HIV response and mobilizing them to implement the new Global AIDS Strategy and the General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. Both documents approved in 2021 recognize key role of the faith partners in the HIV response.
- Through the IFHP, the Initiative is finalizing a Compendium of Promising Practices on action by faith communities on pediatric and adolescent HIV. The Compendium includes over 50 interventions by the faith sector in the areas of service delivery; advocacy; outreach through community groups and volunteers in faith communities; and awareness raising for demand creation in places of worship. The Compendium will serve as a technical/programmatic support to the growing number of faith partners interested in this area of the response. The formal launch of the Compendium is planned to take place in 2022.

¹⁵ For more about the Platform Home | Health Interfaith (interfaith-health-platform.org)

At country level, UNAIDS focuses on strengthening the role and responsibility of faith partners as sustainable partners of the HIV response. This collaboration includes:

- building the capacity of faith partners to implement new policies and innovations;
- improving collaboration and coordination with a wider range of stakeholders in the HIV response;
- addressing rampant challenges attached to HIV stigma and discrimination within faith communities and organizations; and
- leveraging influence, audience and facilities for evidence-based information sharing and advocacy.

In 2021, the consortium of African Christian Health Associations Platform, Caritas Internationalis, Inter-Faith Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Affected by HIV (INERELA+), Islamic Relief Worldwide, World Council of Churches, and St. Paul's University of Kenya carried out a series of activities in countries in alignment with FBO Action Plans to strengthen the input of faith partners in the implementation of national HIV strategies. The engagement of national authorities (NACs) and other key stakeholders helped to guarantee the sustainability of faith-based responses. New FBO action plans in support of the national AIDS strategies were developed in Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire and Uganda, by faith partners in close collaboration with government and other key stakeholders of the HIV response. UNAIDS will support the implementation of those FBO action plans to strengthen the collaboration and ownership of all stakeholders.

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

In 2021, UNAOC continued to lead in the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites. Progress was made in two of its main recommendations: the Global communications campaign and the mapping of religious sites.

The Global communications campaign was launched in September 2020 as a global call to action under the hashtag #forSafeWorship to safeguard religious sites and worshippers worldwide. The campaign invites people around the world to submit multimedia stories about their personal connections to religious sites. Through the website forsafeworship.org, UNAOC continued to receive inspiring stories from people around the globe. A total of 127 submissions were submitted, including selected stories and videos about places of worship in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, UK, and USA.

On the mapping of religious sites, UNAOC and UNOSAT started the phased approach to the mapping in Argentina and Burkina Faso. Work on three additional three pilot countries will be undertaken in 2022.

UNAOC was the convener and/or co-organized and participated in a number of meetings which provided a platform for faith-based actors to build more inclusive and peaceful societies:

- World Interfaith Harmony Week: On 4 February 2021, and on the occasion of the first International Day of Human Fraternity, UNAOC, in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, participated in an interactive panel entitled “A Pathway to the Future”, co-sponsored by the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity and with the participation of the UN Secretary-General.
- Global Pledge for Action Global Pledge for Action by Religious Actors and Faith-Based Organizations to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic in collaboration with the United Nations. In the context of the implementation of the Pledge, signed by more than twenty faith-based organizations in May 2020, six webinars took place in 2021. UNAOC was in the lead in the organization of the two of them focusing on the safeguard of religious sites and the moderation of religious discourse, respectively. The webinars brought together a number of UN experts, religious leaders, faith-based and grass-root based organizations. UNAOC, together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, organized a final meeting to reflect collectively on the six webinars that took place in the course of 2021 and produced a final report containing the peer-to-peer learning snapshots and action-oriented recommendations gathered in the webinars.
- G20 Interfaith Forum (Italy, 11-14 September 2021). UNAOC participated in the opening ceremony and in the Ministerial session dedicated to education and religious diversity.
- Launch of the Global Tolerance Alliance. In the context of the 2021-2022 Dubai Expo, UNAOC participated in the launch of the Global Tolerance Alliance in November 2021. Under the leadership of the United Arab Emirates, this initiative aims to bring together religious leaders, governments and people to promote peaceful coexistence.
- Global Interfaith Summit. On 16 November 2021, in commemoration of the International Day of Tolerance, UNAOC participated in the second edition of the Summit, which included

religious leaders, faith actors, member states and young people with the objective of promoting dialogue and fostering diversity to overcome divisions and mistrust.

- On 10 December 2021, UNAOC and Religious for Peace co-organized a hybrid event entitled “Faith and Diplomacy: Strategic Reflections on Religiously Inspired Global Efforts Towards Building Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies”. During the event, member states, UN representatives, and faith-based organizations reflected on the nexus between faith and diplomacy.

Throughout 2021, and in his capacity as the UN Secretary-General as the United Nations Focal Point to monitor antisemitism and enhance a UN system-wide response, UNAOC High Representative continued his active engagement with representatives of major Jewish organizations, UN relevant entities and treaty bodies, as well as coordinators and envoys on combatting antisemitism.

On 15 March, UNAOC convened a virtual informal meeting on “Exploring Holistic Approaches to Combating Antisemitism”, which gathered representatives of member states, the United Nations and major Jewish organizations. This meeting was intended to be the first of a number of consultations to consider the different facets and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism and gather ideas and proposals that will inform a future results-oriented document that can provide guidance towards a coordinated and enhanced response to antisemitism anchored in human rights. In 2021, the High Representative for UNAOC continued to engage with the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity in the implementation of the principles of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. The document was co-authored and co-signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi. In December 2021, UNAOC met with representatives of the Higher Committee in NY to discuss their partnership in advancing shared objectives, including the global cause of human fraternity.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

I. Key Highlights

As UNDP continues its commitment to deliver contextually specific development programming, and faith-based actors including faith-based organizations (FBOs) are crucial partners whose unique and valuable insights and expertise can be leveraged to inform and strengthen UN policies and programmes. In a variety of contexts, UNDP continues to strengthen its partnership with religious and faith-based actors, who are key implementing partners of UNDP and the broader UN system, with their networks, community trust, and commitment to establishing peace and cohesion being great assets to UNDP's work to build peace and prevent conflict and violent extremism.

COVID-19 and the resulting crisis has undermined one of the greatest assets of peacebuilders, religious actors, women, youth and those working to build peace, tolerance and respect for diversity which are the partnerships, trust, and dialogue that they establish through day-to-day interactions with communities. At UNDP we have been working to recreate these partnerships in spaces where we do not have the ability to meet face to face.

The pandemic is already showing evidence of exacerbating societal divisions between religious groups. Creating unity, solidarity, and tolerance for diverse religions and identities is crucial to promoting peaceful and socially cohesive societies. At the same time, COVID-19 and the resulting crisis has undermined one of the greatest assets of peacebuilders, religious actors, women of faith, youth and those working to build peace, tolerance and respect for diversity which are the partnerships, trust, and dialogue that they establish through day-to-day interactions with communities. Faith-based and faith-based actors and institutions that previously relied on in-person and face-to-face interactions with community members are now being forced to shift to collaborating through social media and other forms of online engagement.

Key Achievements:

At UNDP, we have been working to recreate these partnerships in spaces where we do not have the ability to meet face to face and have supported building dialogue and engagements with faith-based actors in the online space. UNDP has supported faith-based actors, FBOs and women of faith in 22 countries¹⁶ to develop innovative ways to contribute towards building tolerance, respect for diversity, and social cohesion in communities across the globe. This engagement has included building the capacity of religious and/or government institutions in 11 countries¹⁷ to tackle violent extremism and intolerance, supporting faith-based actors in 7 countries¹⁸ to better understand and tackle extremist messaging, misinformation and hate speech, including through innovative approaches, supporting opportunities for religious leaders, women, and youth of faith in 13

¹⁶ Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan.

¹⁷ Bangladesh, Cameroon, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Tanzania.

¹⁸ Bangladesh, Indonesia, Morocco, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Sudan.

countries¹⁹ to create spaces for social cohesion, dialogue and non-violence at the community level, and building the capacity of faith-based actors to prevent violent extremism, including through the detection and response to early signs of radicalization in 8 countries²⁰. In Indonesia, Somalia, and Sri Lanka, UNDP supported COVID-19 response through partnerships with faith-based actors and institutions. Throughout these initiatives, UNDP has trained over 3500 religious and local actors on topics related to religion and/or social cohesion in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Iraq, Somalia, Pakistan, Kenya, Indonesia, and Morocco.

UNDP has also supported the UN's engagement with faith-based actors and advocated for partnership with faith-based actors and FBOs in global fora, through events such as *Setting the Norm: Promoting Grassroots Efforts for Sustainable Peace and Development*, co-hosted by UNDP, the International Dialogue Center (KAICIID) and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, *The Day of Tolerance Celebration* hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and Religions for Peace, in collaboration with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, and *Faith and Diplomacy: Strategic Reflections on Religiously Inspired Global Efforts Towards Building Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and Religions for Peace.

Notable among UNDP partnerships with faith-based actors is our efforts to address hate speech. With the support of our partners, including faith-based actors and communities, UNDP is addressing hate speech, as well as misinformation and disinformation across 40 countries in 5 regions. In Indonesia for example, UNDP supported +150 moderate Islamic scholars to build their capacity to produce and disseminate alternative and peaceful messages that counteract the appeal of violent extremism on digital platforms. UNDP is also supporting advocacy efforts for partnership with faith-based actors in addressing hate speech, through initiatives like the high-level Development Dialogues Event, co-hosted with UNDP and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG).

II. Global, Regional and national Activities in Support of the IATF on Religion and Development

Global

Throughout 2021, UNDP advocated for partnership with faith-based organizations, religious actors, and women and youth of faith in global fora and events.

On 5 March 2021, as part of the 'UNDP Development dialogues: Rethinking solutions to crisis in the decade of action', UNDP and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) jointly organised a [high-level event](#) where, UNDP Cameroon, UNDP Somalia, and their civil society organisation (CSO) partners shared experiences on countering and addressing hate speech. The event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of countering and addressing hate speech while stressing the importance of focusing prevention initiatives at the grassroots, including by engaging with local civil society organizations and religious actors, as per

¹⁹ Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chad, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, and Tanzania.

²⁰ Cameroon, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Maldives, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan.

the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes. The event was moderated by Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.

On 13 July 2021, UNDP, in collaboration with the International Dialogue Center (KAICIID) and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers hosted the event, *Setting the Norm: Promoting Grassroots Efforts for Sustainable Peace and Development*, on the margins of the High-Level Political Forum. UNDP highlighted how the UN can better support religious and traditional actors in sustaining peace, highlighting examples from UNDP country office support to faith-based actors in delivering COVID-19 responses and challenging divisive narratives in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lesotho, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Sudan.

On 16 November 2021, UNDP provided remarks at the Day of Tolerance Celebration event, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, in collaboration with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. UNDP shared our experiences of working in 42 countries to implement Preventing Violent Extremism projects, and distilled some key approaches to preventing violence, building resilience, and promoting peaceful societies. This included responding to the growing threat of hate speech and divisive narratives by leveraging data, new technology, innovative approaches as well as trusted messengers including faith-based actors, to provide positive alternative narratives.

On 1 December 2021, UNDP participating in a strategic debrief event, *Faith and Diplomacy: Strategic Reflections on Religiously Inspired Global Efforts Towards Building Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and Religions for Peace. UNDP highlighted how UN actors can strengthen the nexus between faith and diplomacy and promote peaceful societies, including through supporting the meaningful participation of diverse people of faith in decision-making spaces related to both faith and diplomacy.

Regional

Africa & The Arab States

In Africa, UNDP has continued to strengthen the capacity of religious institutions to prevent violent extremism in Cameroon, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Tanzania (see below for more in-depth details on country-level activities) and more than 615 religious institutions and actors were mobilized for PVE in the continent through awareness-raising. UNDP continued its engagement with the African Council of Religious Leaders -Religions for Peace (ACRL-RfP), which brings together national religious leaders' networks from Africa. UNDP participated in its 4th General Assembly which was held from 29 November until 3 December 2021 and presented the regional challenges of Preventing of Violent Extremism in Africa as well as the roles of religious leaders to address these challenges with UNDP support at the regional and country-levels.

UNDP also established a new partnership with the “Global Interfaith Network for People of All Sexes, Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions” (GIN) to support progressive faith leaders in Africa, to challenge hatred and discrimination against sexual and gender minorities in the region. The UNDP-GIN partnership was launched with an Africa Regional Dialogue on 3 December 2021 that convened faith leaders to discuss the roles of progressive faith leaders in

promoting human rights for all - including LGBTI people - within government and policy making.

Europe and Central Asia

Under the EU-UN Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism in Asia (STRIVE Asia) project, UNDP supported the establishment of C/PVE Advisory Groups in 5 Central Asian Countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan consisting of stakeholders ranging from youth, women, religious leaders, faith-based organizations, social service providers, law enforcement, justice institutions etc. UNDP is supporting these advisory groups to identify and develop locally-owned, inclusive, PVE action plans that address various elements of preventing violent extremism from youth empowerment to mental health and psychosocial support.

South & South East Asia

In Asia, UNDP is working with religious actors, including women of faith, to address harmful attitudes towards gender identity that can fuel intolerance. Through our partnership with UN Women in Asia, UNDP is positioning women's empowerment and cultivating non-violent communication (NVC) as key to promoting peaceful communities. Based on one of the key findings of the joint UNDP/ UN Women research project, [Conflicting Identities](#), the two organizations have piloted a [nonviolent communication training programme](#) to use various language techniques, deep listening and consciousness skills to project ambitions beyond the limits of the social contexts. The innovative pilots aimed at empowering local community and religious leaders in Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka to build positive social connections and offer practical alternatives to violence.

National

Indonesia

UNDP Indonesia is implementing a joint initiative, the GUYUB project (2019-2021), with UNODC and UN Women, funded by the UNTFHS, which aims to tackle the root causes of violent extremism in East-Java, and strengthen human security. A large component of the project focused on capacity building, advocacy, as well as online and offline awareness raising on PVE targeting youth, religious leaders and school communities, in partnership with interfaith communication forums, civil society and governments of East Java to promote dialogue and peaceful narratives. As the result of concerted efforts from Civil Society, local government, authorities, and communities, representatives of all teachers across East Java made a declaration for PVE through the very first provincial PVE inter-school forum ever established in the country, supported by the Head of Legislative Council, the Head of Department of Education and Vice Governor of East Java. This declaration upholds the centrality of equality and human rights for increasing the human security in school environments at the provincial level. GUYUB's community based and youth-driven capacity building, advocacy and awareness raising activities have reached over 1057 offline beneficiaries and 840,112 online beneficiaries, including students, teachers, religious counselors, persons with disabilities (PWD) and youth, over 40% of which are female. To ensure sustainability, further support was provided to the East Java government in facilitating policy dialogues for a provincial PVE curriculum (muatan lokal) for high schools, demonstrating the success of GUYUB intervention in creating a transformative and organic change for PVE in East Java.

UNDP's PROTECT (Preventing Violence Extremism through Promoting Tolerance and Respect for Diversity) Project is conducting research through the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID) titled "The Role of Women in Religious-Based Organizations to Prevent Violent Extremism." This research complemented research findings from research conducted in 2019 under the project, which included enhancing the role of women in religious-based organizations. The aims of the research included: (1) Identify the knowledge of Women's wing of Religious-based Organizations regarding the transformation of the tendencies and nature of extremism, as well as their position in responding to violent extremism; (2) Identify best practices and constructive lessons learned from violent extremism prevention programs; and (3) Identify the challenges and support received by the organizations. The research gathered data from 77 respondents (71 female and 6 male) from women's organizations in 6 regions (Jabodetabek, Bandung, Malang, Surabaya, Surakarta, and Yogyakarta) from Women Wings Organizations, Inter-Religious Organizations (SRILI), Percik Foundation Salatiga, and Women-led Organizations (AMAN Indonesia), etc.

The research found that: 1) Women's wings organization of RBOs are able to have awareness and take action in the prevention space by externalizing internal values; 2) Women's wings organization of RBOs have the social assets to prevent violent extremism through social cohesion and religious moderatism; 3) Women's wing organization of RBOs succeeded in carrying out activities in evolving the area of religious moderation, however the support from Government and other policy makers are needed; and 4) The system for preventing violent extremism in women's wing organizations of RBOs has not run optimally since the majority of programmes are donor-driven which limits the sustainability of funding.

UNDP partnered with Google Indonesia to support the Wahid Foundation, to implement the Salam Forum, an initiative which will build the capacity of moderate Islamic scholars to produce and disseminate peaceful messages that counteract the appeal of violent extremism online. This initiative will 1) Increase the awareness of Islamic scholars to be more active in creating narratives on peacebuilding and prevention of violent extremism through social media, 2) Improve digital campaign technique skills of Islamic scholars in creating narratives on peacebuilding and prevention of violent extremism, and 3) Establish more concrete collaboration among Islamic scholars in Indonesia and Asia in creating digital peace campaigns. 10 content creators have been selected to develop videos to promote tolerance and respect for diversity with various perspectives and angles, also targeted to involve religious leaders in the development of the videos. This initiative is also supported by Islami.co.

UNDP's CONVEY Project - "Building Resilience in Preventing Violent Extremism through Moderate Religious Education in Indonesia" produced a variety of research products in 2021, in partnership with PPIM UIN Jakarta. One [study](#), carried out at three state Islamic universities, highlighted how the religious knowledge of the university members can positively and significantly impact COVID-19 prevention behaviours. A second study, [The Narratives of Religious-Based Extremist Groups in Indonesia: Religious Backgrounds and Religious Aspiration](#), examined the relationship between possessing religious educational background and individual decisions to join radical and extremist groups. A third study explores the [condition of religious moderation in State Islamic High Education](#). The CONVEY Project also implements "Promoting

Religious Moderation, Focusing on Education to Strengthen Social Stability in Indonesia in the context of COVID-19”. The project had completed two studies: The National Survey on Religion, Pandemics and Disaster in Indonesia, to generate knowledge on the impact of Covid-19 on social cohesion, particularly on religious dimensions, in Indonesia through a gender sensitive approach. This research is promoting religious moderation through policy engagement. The second study focuses on the same topic, focussed on the Island of Java.

Sri Lanka

UNDP supported the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL), a faith based civil society organization to design and launch a virtual peace museum that is complemented by an e-learning platform targeting youth, children as well as adults in Sri Lanka. This is a youth-led initiative and is also the first in Sri Lanka where historical dialogue is promoted to understand and appreciate religious diversity and importance of religious coexistence in Sri Lanka. It aims to instill critical thinking among a young audience whose attitudes, perceptions can be changed through critical historical awareness as opposed to myths and beliefs promoted through popular culture and media. The [MinorMatters](#) platform is a one stop online repository of resources concerning the Freedom of Religion or Belief in Sri Lanka. Through this partnership, UNDP supported NCEASL to create a mobile game “[Aiyo Alice](#)” targeted at youth attending school, which aims to give players the necessary knowledge to act responsibly not only to disengage from harmful online content but also to promote communal harmony. It also teaches youth about the adverse effects a situation such as COVID-19 can have on communities, while encouraging critical thinking and digital citizenship, and reinforcing the idea that youth can be active contributors in their own communities in dissolving tensions.

In February 2021, UNDP Sri Lanka, together with Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena Sansadaya, a national civil society organization (CSO), launched a comprehensive training of trainers program for 100 selected youth religious leaders representing 10 districts. These leaders are expected to engage another 2000 community leaders and religious leaders in creating safe spaces for dialogues on social cohesion, non-violence and preventive action against spread of violent extremism in Sri Lanka.

Maldives

UNDP Maldives collaborated with the Ministry of Home Affairs to engage religious leaders with civil society organizations to detect early signs of radicalization. The collaboration has yielded multiple avenues of engagement with one being a regional exchange program, developing scholarly articles and other knowledge products that dismantle the justifications used to promote violent extremism targeted at religious scholars, imams, and teachers, or creating modules specifically on tolerance that will be taught at an undergraduate level.

Bangladesh

UNDP Bangladesh completed the first phase of the Partnerships for a Tolerant, Inclusive Bangladesh (PTIB) initiative (2017-2021) which aimed at understanding and preventing hate speech, violence, and extremism in Bangladesh through a research facility, citizen engagement—with a focus on youth, migrants, and religious communities—and government engagement. Under PTIB’s Digital Peace Movement (DPM), the Digital Khichuri Challenge (DKC), Diversity for Peace (D4P), and Peace Talk Café (PTC) have engaged many non-traditional development

partners and reached out to new audiences with messages of tolerance and diversity.

In 2021, UNDP's CSO partner directly engaged with 64 Imams, who lead prayers in the mosque, to sensitize them on respecting diversity, and the harms of rumour and misinformation on social media. Later on, several Imams reported that they delivered the topics in their Friday prayer sermons. The same sensitization sessions were also conducted for the students in two Madrasas. In addition, UNDP's partners organized interfaith dialogues at the national level and in a district known for communal tension hotspots.

Philippines

UNDP has supported women of faith-led initiatives to promote social cohesion, tolerance and dialogue, for example through the creation of the Women's Rapid Action and Mobilization Platform in the Philippines, a network of grassroots mediators and women of faith who are working towards changing attitudes and behaviors that promote violence, convening community actors to promote diplomacy and peaceful resolution and creating spaces for dialogue.

In Mindanao, research previously produced by the START-PEACE project is being further developed to help inform the teaching and preaching frameworks in madrasas, mosques and masjids handled by different faith-based leaders as well as towards mainstreaming research findings in the peace education curriculum of schools, colleges, and universities in the province.

UNDP supported an intra-faith dialogue group of Muslim FBLs in publishing a book featuring known Ulamas in the region on "Principles of Islamic Law for Prevention and Responding to Violent Extremism as Perceived by Selected Ulama and Faith-Based Organizations in Mindanao." A Guidebook on Conflict Resolution and Violence Prevention and Advocacy on Honest and Peaceful Elections" was also developed by the FBL group and will be utilized by civic and faith-based groups during upcoming national and local elections in 2022. UNDP has partnered closely with the FBLs in countering misinformation related to COVID 19, and especially through "khutbah" in mosques.

UNDP Philippines also works closely with the Christian for Peace Movement (CFPM) which primarily aims to create a venue where minorities in the BARMM can meaningfully participate in the peace process and affairs of the new Bangsamoro government. The work is mainly focused on addressing concerns in the Bangsamoro Region such as: 1. Abridged participation of the minorities (settlers, Christians and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the establishment of the new Bangsamoro Government, 2. A lack of a sustained programme to reduce decades long cycles of violence rooted in historical injustices and overlapping land claims and 3. The lurking threat of violence extremism targeting the ranks of the Muslim and IP youth. Now, the BARMM Government has established an Office of the Settler Communities with the primary task of providing advice and assisting the office of the Chief Minister on matters related to settlers' affairs.

In October 2021, UNDP also supported the Ministry of the Interior and Local Government of BARMM in conducting a series of consultation workshops involving CSOs, women and youth organizations, and faith-based leaders and focused on the assessment of risks, mapping of existing capacities and initiatives for community resilience.

Iraq

In Iraq, UNDP established discussion platforms among 300 religious leaders in Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and Anbar to discuss the challenges of reconciliation among community members that are preventing the return and reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The discussion platforms will be extended to Diyala and Kirkuk in 2022 and UNDP will work on implementing priority recommendations that resulted from these forums. UNDP is working closely with religious leaders on building their capacities and supporting their efforts to promote peaceful coexistence and advance the return and reintegration process for IDPs in partnership with local and national authorities. UNDP has been working with diverse religious leaders across Iraq to enhance their role in community coexistence and cohesion. From 2020 to 2021, over 82 religious leaders including Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, Kakai, Bahai, Zardashti, and Sabean Mandaean representatives were provided capacity building and established a Coexistence Network to foster dialogue, coexistence, and tolerance amongst targeted communities. In the Kurdistan Region, UNDP conducted a training programme for 2,228 imams on understanding Islamophobia, ways of preventing radicalism, violence against women, and women's rights. Additionally, in Ninewa, 287 religious leaders were targeted in a programme to advance competencies in tolerance, counter-extremism, and engagement in peacebuilding. The trained religious leaders were engaged in leading 250 peer education sessions targeting another 2,000 religious leaders.

Cameroon

In Cameroon, UNDP has supported the strengthening of religious educational institutions. This has included the establishment of an association of Quranic teachers, developing a management handbook for quranic girls' schools in the Far-North region of Cameroon, providing capacity building for quranic teachers, and educating students on the importance of peaceful cohabitation, civic education, and peacebuilding. UNDP has also supported the operation of a platform for 30 community stakeholders, including religious actors, to come together in monthly meetings to analyze security situations, monitor human rights abuses, and discuss trends in early warning.

Chad

UNDP has introduced training, awareness raising, civil-military dialogues, community sensitization activities for local actors to complement the military response to Boko Haram. Since the start of the Project's implementation in 2019, 36 at-risk island communities with over 20,000 inhabitants have been reached. The series of trainings with local authorities, local peace committees and religious authorities on the Prevention of Violent Extremism has enabled 168 people to be equipped as focal points and lead awareness raising activities. The impact of these PVE activities resulted in improved trust between civilians, security forces and justice actors, monitored by community perception surveys.

Somalia

In Somalia, UNDP supported both federal and state-level Ministries of Religious Affairs in establishing a country-wide network of like-minded religious leaders working to reduce the spread of violent extremist content and to promote the peaceful and tolerant message of Islam. The capacity of these religious leaders to encourage peace and address cases of extremism through dialogue has been enhanced through training on Islamic principles of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Members of the network were further encouraged to analyze extremist propaganda, develop, and disseminate religious counter-narratives. Particular emphasis was placed on supporting the victims of attacks by extremist groups. In commemoration of the 14 October 2017

bombing, 734 traditional chairs were embroidered with the victims' names and congregational prayers were offered across Mogadishu. The commemoration event was accompanied by a digital communications campaign led by the federal Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, giving victims' voices a forum. Under the slogan #NamesNotNumbers, the Ministry is advocating for coordinated support to victims of violent extremism in Somalia.

The network of religious leaders and madrassa teachers was additionally assisted in facing the COVID-19 pandemic. With an awareness campaign called “Clerics vs. COVID”, UNDP enabled religious leaders as trusted messengers within the community to share life-saving health-related information on prevention and response measures combined with religious guidance. The ulema were encouraged to incorporate messages of peace, solidarity, human sympathy, and support in a time of global crisis, and to specifically counter hate speech and misinformation by violent extremist groups that the virus is spread by government officials and foreigners.

Tanzania

UNDP has been supporting the Tanzania Police Force (TPF) on Community Policing. Under this component, TPF conducted neighbourhood and outreach training sessions for various groups in July 2021 in Mwanza and Tanga. The objective of these training sessions was to develop preventive violent extremism knowledge, public awareness, and integration through community policing programs in identified as “at-risk” areas. The training sessions targeted Neighbourhood Watch Groups (NHG), religious leaders, women groups, and youth groups. The sessions were organized based on the participant categories. Discussions included causes of violence and radicalization, signs of radicalisation, the threat faced by Tanzania on violent extremism. Most importantly were the roles of community members in preventing violent extremism. Participants shared their challenges in working on security issues in the society. The sessions called for increased involvement of community groups, continuous awareness and training and developing mechanisms at community levels to address VE threats. In Mwanza, the sensitization reached approximately 180 NHG members (M-130, F-50) 80 religious leaders (M-60, F-20) 70 youth (M-50, F-20), 73 women representees. In Tanga, community policing training reached 454 individuals (257M-197F) including 62 faith-based actors (62- 50M-12F), and 75 representatives from Women Groups.

Thailand

UNDP has been engaging with youth on social incubation and intergenerational learning through various activities in 2021. One of which is the Youth Co:Lab program organized under the theme of “Social Innovation to leave no one behind”. Nine youth innovation ideas were incubated through a 2-month long intensive incubation programme. [Online One-Stop Service Zakat Platform](#), a youth innovation idea from the Southern Border province, is one of the winners of Youth Co:Lab Thailand 2021. This project showcased a combination of religious principles and innovative digital systems to tackle inequalities in the region and beyond.

Muslims are the majority population in the Southern Border Provinces in Thailand. For adult Muslims, it is an annual obligation to subsidize those struggling with poverty or new converts with a fraction of their wealth, called “Zakat”. With UNDP’s support, this youth team selected 3 pilot areas for the operation of this online Zakat platform: Yala, Narathiwat, and Phatthalung. Local Zakat administrators will assist in overseeing the registration and the distribution of zakat. Zakat

funds will be managed with more transparency, ensuring that those in poverty can truly receive financial and material support. This one-stop service is also expected to lessen the workload of mosque staff in regards to zakat, such as the collection and distribution of donations.

Tunisia

UNDP Tunisia, through the ‘Tarabot – Cohesion to prevent violence’ project, has supported the analytical review of the existing literature on violent extremism trends in Tunisia. The [research](#) provides an analytical framework to inform interventions both at the social and individual levels. Key findings of the study were shared during the workshop, held on 23rd June, with the committees that are responsible for drafting the new national strategy. The workshop convened 15 senior officials from different ministries (Defence, Interior, Justice, Religious Affairs, Youth, Education, Finance, etc.) who engaged in working groups to discuss the key guiding principles to distill from the research in order to inform the strategy.

The research identifies 34 drivers of violent extremism which are classified according to 7 categories. Religious factors are one specific category but don't play a decisive role according to the risk matrix that was derived from the context analysis. One exception relates to a driver that was labeled 'repression of the religious sphere' and intersects with other governance factors that highlight the potential counterproductive effect of CVE and CT policies on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Morocco

In July 2021, UNDP in partnership with [Rabita Mohammadia des Oulémas](#), whose mission is to promote a tolerant Islam, launched a 3-day training workshop as part of the project called “Fight Against Online Radicalization of Young People in Morocco” to provide young people with capacity to analyze and highlight the risks associated with online radicalization towards violent extremism.

Under the same project, on 15 December 2021 in Rabat, an international conference was held for the exchange and sharing of good practices against the online radicalization of young people.

Kyrgyzstan

UNDP supported the establishment of 9 C/PVE Advisory Groups, consisting of youth, women, religious leaders, faith-based organizations, social service providers, law enforcement, justice institutions etc., who are in the process of developing local PVE action plans that address various elements of preventing violent extremism from youth empowerment to mental health and psychosocial support.

UNDP is also in the process of facilitating public discussions to support the revision of the draft Law "On freedom of religion in the Kyrgyz Republic" together with the State committee for religious affairs. UNDP is also supporting the drafting process of the new versions of the Laws on “Countering Terrorism” and “Countering Extremist Activity”. These laws have been launched to be developed in line with the broader Justice Sector Reform with an aim to ensure human rights and strengthen whole-of-government coordination towards prevention.

Uzbekistan

UNDP, through the framework of the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism in Asia (STRIVE Asia) project, built the capacity of 50 community representatives, including local authorities, religious leaders (10 persons), youth, women leaders, on a wide range of thematic areas on preventing violent extremism such as legislation of Uzbekistan in the sphere of countering terrorism and extremism, regional threats, motivations and reasons for the youth participation in violent actions, manipulation phenomenon through social media, protection of human rights in preventive measures to counter violent extremism in communities.

Pakistan

UNDP supported the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to mainstream more than 3.2 million students studying in 32,000 religious seminaries across Pakistan. The mainstreaming involves registration of Madaris with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, introduction of mainstream subjects like English, Science, and Mathematics in the curriculum of religious seminaries, and facilitation of Madaris students in transitioning to mainstream educational and skills development opportunities following the completion of their foundational education in religious seminaries.

Throughout 2021, UNDP provided institutional support to the Government of Pakistan represented by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and downstream engagement opportunities to more than 200 students in selected religious seminaries based in erstwhile conflict affected areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The former included establishment of a Programme Support Unit at the Ministry that supported the capacity development of Ministry staff tasked with registering religious seminaries along with development of programme management and HR protocols for institutionalizing the Madaris mainstreaming work under a designated and permanent Department of Religious Affairs. In addition to this, UNDP provided livelihood skills to 223 young people studying in religious seminaries and organized inter-youth dialogues between young people from seminaries and those studying in mainstream educational institutions. The economic component of the project helped in expanding opportunities for economic integration for seminary students who have very limited career options due to the outdated nature of their curriculum while the social pillar helped in increasing their understanding of alternative points of view about religion, politics, and social issues through direct interaction with their counterparts in universities.

Ethiopia

UNDP Ethiopia initiated a Project Initiation Plan (2019-2020) to support government efforts necessitated by the need to undertake basic steps facilitating the development and launching of a full-fledged PVE programme. The Initiation Plan centering the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE), outlined activities including assessments, consultative meetings, baseline studies, basic capacity building for partners, sensitization, and programme promotion activities. These activities contributed to UNDP's SP Outcome, i.e., "Citizens' expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance". It also contributed to CPD Outcome: "National capacities strengthened for reintegration, reconciliation, peaceful management of conflict and prevention of violent extremism in response to national policies and priorities". UNDP's initiative facilitated IRCE's engagement in peace dialogues, establishing local peace architecture involving members of congregations, educating youth and women to play roles in the prevention of extremism, tolerance among social, religious and political

groups thereby impacting the development of democratic discourse. Through this support, a national PVE assessment report was finalized and shared to stakeholders including the state (both federal and local), civil society and religious leaders as well as their institutions. This engagement has continued in 2021 and has included technical level discussion around strategic matters relating to this theme.

Kenya

In Kenya, UNDP trained 75 religious leaders and teachers (55 of which were women), and 135 government officers (60 of which were women) with the National Counterterrorism Center to strengthen partnership with communities to reduce the risk of recruitment and radicalization.

Ghana

UNDP through the “Building capacity for the development of PVE action plans in Benin, Ghana and Togo” and the Strengthening local capacities for green and inclusive recovery” in partnership with National Security Centre for Counter Terrorism, Regional Peace Councils and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding built the capacity of 499 community members in 7 border districts and 2 at the national capital. 100 (53 men, 47 women) religious leaders were part of the trainings. The training included religious leaders, youth, women, security personnel and local government officials to prevent violent extremism through the use of early warning and early response mechanisms, building social cohesion among other key topics.

Sudan

In Sudan, UNDP supported the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments’ efforts towards preventing and countering violent extremism and hate speech. The first religious coexistence conference was held in October 2020 to advocate for religious freedom and peaceful coexistence, expanding the circle of cooperation around humanitarian partnerships, enhancing the role of religions leaders in building peace and social peace, and strengthening the role of Mosques and Churches in social peace in Sudan. UNDP has also supported the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments and Sudan National Commission for Counter Terrorism (SNCCT)’s efforts towards curbing hate speech in Sudan. A national workshop was held in August 2021 to analyze the best practices, challenges, and opportunities in addressing hate speech. Further, UNDP Sudan is currently developing mechanisms through the Digital X initiative. UNDP and Koe Koe Tech jointly implemented a pilot initiative to understand the driving factors and narratives of violent extremism in online spaces to enhance PVE programming.

Kosovo*

"Cultural Heritage as a Driver for Inter Community Dialogue and Social Cohesion” (2020-2022) project in Kosovo*, undertaken in cooperation with the European Commission, among other objectives, highlights the importance of cooperation with religious bodies as a confidence-building measure in post-conflict environments especially when social division runs through ethnic or religious lines, including Serb Orthodox Church of Kosovo, Islamic Community of Kosovo, the Catholic Church, and Tarikats. In 2021, the UNDP has been promoting intangible cultural heritage as a bond for social cohesion, including by organizing community-led discussion on factors affecting social cohesion. Women and youth inclusion in protection and preservation of intangible cultural heritage was emphasized. UNDP activities have strengthened capacities to protect and preserve such heritage through institutional mechanisms. UNDP has also been involved in

restoration, rehabilitation and beautification of cultural and religious sites and their adjacent areas. Cultural heritage has proved a successful entry point on re-building trust and improving inter-community acceptance as it addresses the need for respect of cultural identity and heritage of all.

* - References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

Tajikistan

In 2021, UNDP continued to implement the Empowering Youth for a Peaceful Tajikistan (2020-2021) PBF project, implemented jointly by UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women. This project emphasizes the role of youth in safeguarding peace in Tajikistan by several means, including by reaching to secular and religious youth- and women-led organizations in the country. It aims to increase resilience among Tajikistan's youth to violent narratives in areas of exacerbated vulnerability due to poverty.

III. UNDP Resources/ Publications

- [Strengthening the Bond of Religious Moderation in Islamic Campus](#)
- [The Narratives of Religious-Based Extremist Group in Indonesia: Religious Background and Religious Aspiration](#)
- [Preliminary Study of Resilience and Vulnerability of Islamic Educational Institutions in Responding to the Social Impact of Cohesion during the Covid-19 Pandemic Crisis: Study at Three State Islamic Universities \(Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta\)](#)
- [Seeding Hope Harvesting Faith](#)
- [Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI People: A Handbook for Parliamentarians \(including sections on engaging with religious leaders on LGBTI issues\)](#)
- The [MinorMatters](#) platform is a one stop online repository of resources concerning the Freedom of Religion or Belief in Sri Lanka.
- Mobile game "[Aiyo Alice](#)" targeted at youth, aims to give players the necessary knowledge to act responsibly not only to disengage from harmful online content but also to promote communal harmony.
- [Les facteurs favorisant l'extrémisme violent dans la Tunisie post-révolutionnaire \(2011-2021\)](#)
- Youth Co:Lab 2021 Report: [Youth Co:Lab Thailand 2021 Report | UNDP in Thailand](#)
- Article about Zakat Online Platform Team: <https://www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/online-zakat-a-new-model-of-islamic-fundraising-platform-that-closes-inequality-gap/>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

One of the main conclusions of Third Academic Forum of UNESCO Chairs in Intercultural Dialogue held on the margins of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue (Baku 2-3 May 2019) was that while religious differences are readily publicized as a cause or pretext for violence, the international community is yet to discover the pervasive role of religious and faith-based actors in building community peace. It was felt that the religious communities with their credible appeal with vast human resources and reach could readily inspire forgiveness and reconciliation within and across their communities. It was in this light that UNESCO, in cooperation with the UNESCO Chair for Peace at Banaras University will develop a compendium of innovative practices related to community-level interreligious dialogue.

In 2021, a final research plan of the publication was produced by the UNESCO Chair for Peace at Banaras University and research undertaken to collate good practices among experts, civil society, and faith-based organisations, with the aim of ensuring the coherence of the publication. A call to UN entities and UNITWIN Chairs was launched for contributing to this initiative, that will be published in 2022.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

UN Women participated in different advocacy spaces at the UN and continued providing critical guidance on gender equality issues, multilateralism, and the role of faith actors in upholding the human rights mandate of the UN. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in the common lives of women and girls including their political participation and leadership - from increased reports of domestic violence, unpaid care responsibilities, rates of child marriage and millions of women plunging into extreme poverty as they lose their jobs in higher numbers than men. Therefore, UN Women continued expanding civil society partnerships by collaborating with **strong feminist leaders** who do their activism through, **religion** and **culture** acknowledging their vital role in **changing norms and culture**.

Interventions during 2021

1. UN Women strategically supported ACT Alliance, World Council of Churches, Islamic Relief USA, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, The United Methodist Church, United Religions Initiative (URI) in co-organizing the 7th annual symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs on the theme “*2021: A Defining Year for Accelerating Gender Equality, Equity and Justice.*” The COVID-19 pandemic in its devastating impact brought to fore the pre-existing exacerbated social inequalities in all areas of social, cultural, economic, and political life which disproportionately impacted women’s lives. Within that context and evidence of push-back on gains made in gender inequality, the symposium discourse focused on how faith actors can scale up collaborations with other actors like the UN and governments to accelerate the realization of gender equality, equity, and justice. The symposium emphasized the importance of scaling up collaboration with the United Nations and a renewed commitment to building back better together.
2. In 2021, UN Women convened the Generation Equality Forum together with the governments of France and Mexico in partnership with youth and civil society. The Generation Equality Forum created a new momentum for tangible actions to accelerate gender equality and mobilized more than \$40 Billion in commitments. The outcome of the forum was a 5 year Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality. The GEF process signaled a renewed commitment by the international community to fulfill on the agenda for change in the Beijing Platform for Action. As UN Women expands its civil society constituency, it will leverage its convening power to increase its support to faith movements.

Faith Based Organizations issued a joint call for the inclusion of religious actors and faith-based networks in Generation Equality. They also issued a joint communique highlighting the importance of FBOs and their leaders as allies to Generation Equality. Several faith partners also signed up as commitment makers to the Action Coalitions.

3. UN Women, in partnership with the Church of England and the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Leadership Network convened a consultation on Gender and freedom of religion and belief, exploring opportunities for synergies and learning with different practitioners on how

to build communities in which all people, regardless of their gender and faith can thrive. The discussion centered around women's rights and FoRB as two indivisible and interrelated rights. It explored how parliamentarians and faith and belief leaders can contribute to these efforts using the SDG framework ensuring that no woman or girl is left behind because of their gender or the religion or belief they hold.

4. UN Women has continued to strengthen its partnership with the global MenEngage Alliance through the MenEngage global [3rd "Ubuntu" Symposium](#), which gathered more than 700 member organisations of the MenEngage Alliance across 70 countries worldwide. It started in November 2020 and concluded in June 2021 with the adoption of the Ubuntu Declaration and Call to Action which is a call to center feminist systems change, accountability, decolonization, youth leadership and inter-sectionality in work to transform masculinities and engage men and boys in gender equality and social justice. UN Women understands the need to mobilize all sectors toward the goal of gender equality, including the importance of working with FBOs as allies and agents of change in transforming patriarchal masculinities, from interpersonal to institutional levels.

5. Engagement with FBOs, religious and traditional leaders

At least 36 UN Women Country and Regional Offices work with FBOs, religious and cultural leaders in various thematic areas employing different strategies with the common goal of safeguarding the rights of women and girls.

Acknowledging the crucial role that traditional and religious leaders play as **influencers and custodians of cultural practices within the communities**, partnership with these leaders strengthens the [preventive measures](#) towards addressing Gender Based Violence and the eradication of Harmful Traditional Practices like Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage. The Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA) established in February 2019 with over 300 members in various countries in Africa aims to drive the transformation and eradication of negative cultural practices, customs, and traditions.

UN Women also held [dialogues](#) showcasing the good practices from religious and traditional leaders to promote girls' education as well as a set of concrete actions that traditional leaders can initiate with local stakeholders.

Interpretation of sacred text is crucial in **challenging social norms** that endorse violence against women and harmful practices; for example in Egypt, religious leaders have been part of [awareness raising](#) initiatives against Female Genital Mutilation whilst in Fiji [advocacy within faith settings](#) has been heightened to prevent violence. [The Spotlight Initiative](#) has also been implemented with various FBOs in the various regions with the aim of ending all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030, and **to empower, promote, and protect the rights of women and girls** worldwide.

6. Strengthened collaboration with universities

UN Women acknowledges the importance of creating avenues for open dialogue on issues through a faith and gender lens in secular higher academic settings. Through the [Student Fellows for Faith and Gender Justice program](#), UN Women continues to support **feminist student activism**. The

longstanding relationship between the UN Women and the Office of Religious Life at Princeton University provides a critical opportunity for students to learn about the role of religion in global issues and how secular agencies such as the UN can serve as effective partners with religious communities. It is in this context that UN Women continues to support a strengthened relationship with the University to examine the functioning and effects of gendered structures and norms within faith-based institutions rooted in the lived experiences of people of faith.

In 2022, UN Women will focus on supporting movement building, sustainability and strengthening effective **partnerships with FBOs for social justice** in the context of shrinking civic space, humanitarian and conflict contexts and increasing threats to women human rights defenders and young women human rights defenders. This means continuing to expand its constituency, acknowledging the **power and access** of political and religious leaders, meaningfully engaging in **political dialogues**, and building allyship and alliances. It will continue to focus on the normative work and cultural change, which includes working on **challenging discriminatory laws, family law, ending violence against women, economic justice, sexual harassment and transforming patriarchal masculinities**. It's also an opportunity for UN Women to strengthen its gender equality work with men and boys. UN Women will also continue advocating for equality in law, calling for full legal protection for women and girls, in all sectors, in line with CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

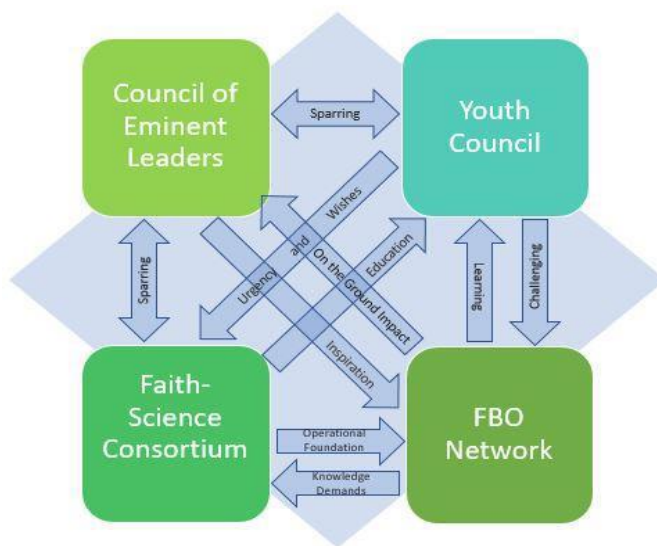
United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)

[UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative](#) remains committed to inspiring and empowering faith organizations and their leaders to advocate for protecting the environment, working alongside dedicated strategic partners to green faith-based organizations' investments and assets and provide faith organizations with the knowledge and networks to effectively communicate with decision-makers and the public.

Advancing Values-driven Environmental Governance

The [Faith for Earth Coalition](#) strategically addresses local, regional and global climate and environment-related issues with faith leaders, communities and organisations towards enhanced environmental stewardship. While focusing on the [three overarching goals](#) to:

- 1) Strengthen Partnership with Faith-Based Organizations' Leadership for Policy Impact;
- 2) Green Faith-Based Organizations' Investments, Operations and Assets; and
- 3) Establish an Accessible Knowledge-Based Support System. The Team in 2021 made forward leaps towards the establishment of the Coalition.



In [2020](#), Faith for Earth [secured the endorsement of Mr. Guomundur Ingi Guobrandsson, Minister of Iceland](#) for the presentation of the Coalition at the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA). Supporting efforts include:

- The [Faith for Nature](#) Conference in Iceland that produced '[Our Sacred Commitment](#)' calling for greater interfaith cooperation globally.
- Strategic documents relating to the Coalition including the establishment of the [Faith for Earth Trust Fund](#) followed by a brainstorming session in [January 2021](#) to identify environmental priority areas, priority actions and funding opportunities from traditional and non-traditional donors to finance the activities of the Coalition and support implementing partners.
- In collaboration with the Office of the Bishop of Iceland and a number of Icelandic partners convened a hybrid meeting called [Skálholt III: A Strategic Approach Towards Realizing the Faith for Earth Coalition](#).
- [Recommendations](#) calling for the adoption of a global resolution, integrating the contributions of faith actors to environmental governance and establishing a global Faith for Earth Coalition within UNEP with the needed capacity and financial resources to achieve its goals; and

- Publication of [The Role of Faith, Values and Ethics in Strengthening Action for Nature and Environmental Governance](#) recognizing a critical and historical role that faith actors have played (and continue to play) within the UN System in driving action for the environment with the aim of supporting the development of the Resolution by the Government of Iceland.

Faith for Earth issued a [policy brief](#) in collaboration with the King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (KAICIID) that presents an innovative and integrated model for global environmental governance that is coherent and calls for the integration of the diverse expressions of one's moral duty to protect the environment. Adopting an ethics and values-based approach is critical in addressing the 2030 Agenda that is people-centered and acknowledges that a healthy planet is an essential requirement for Sustainable Development.

Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth

In 2020, Faith for Earth initiated a global push to give a voice to the Islamic perspective on the environment that culminated with the creation of [Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth](#) designed to showcase Islam's teachings on the environment and spur the world's 1.8 billion Muslims to embrace sustainability as part of their everyday lives in a bid to combat climate change. The role of UNEP was mandated through a request at the [8th Ministerial Conference of the Ministers of the Environment of Islamic countries](#) that was held in October 2019.

In August [2021](#), The Core Team invited more than 250 Islamic Institutions, Scholars, and Faith-based Organisations from around the world representing a broad range of denominations to a [consultative process](#) with the aim to solicit feedback, thoughts, and interest towards the publication and implementation of the Covenant. In December 2021, the [Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science \(IFEES\)](#) convened the co-authors in Leeds, United Kingdom to deliberate on the feedback received towards finalizing the Covenant.

The Core and Scholars Drafting Team have been engaged in several speaking opportunities around the world on the importance, process of formation/development and potential in strengthening an Islamic ethic for the environment:

- [Sustainability Talk](#) Series hosted by UKM-YSD Chair for Sustainability where Dr. Iyad Abumoghli [explored the significance and progress of Al-Mizan](#) to strengthen local, regional and international actions that combat climate change and other threats to the planet.
- [2021 Virtual Parliament of the World's Religions Assembly](#) where the Core Team explored the basis for the Covenant. The speakers presented Al-Mizan to inspire and motivate faith-based institutions to call for ambitious action for the protection of the natural world.
- Islam, Environment and Sustainability hosted by the Malaysian Environmental Professional Practitioners Society (MEPS) to unite environmental practitioners and promote environmental and sustainability related programs.

Faith & Ecology: Development of Knowledge Resources and Capacity Building

Faith for Earth has partnered with leading institutions to develop a range of learning materials including:

- In collaboration with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), UN Women, the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa and

Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), focused on the intersection of [People and Planet: Gender, Environment and Climate in the 2030 Agenda](#) in a [global learning conference](#).

- In 2020, Faith for Earth partnered with the [Parliament of World Religions](#), [Bhumi Global](#), and the [United Religions Initiative](#) to publish a landmark [Progress & Outlook Report on Faith Action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) to commemorate 5 years after the launch of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Report focused on mapping the contributions of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) to the SDGs, highlighting impactful projects and provides recommendations for achieving greater impact. The [Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#) (Yale FORE) thereafter developed an [online database](#) that captures and reports on the progress faith-based projects towards the environmental SDGs.;
- With [KAICIID](#) the first of eight online modules has been launched. The eight modules correspond to UNEP's [Programme of Work](#) critical thematic areas on Climate Change; Water Issues; Environmental Governance; Financing Sustainable Development; Ecosystem Restoration; Chemicals and Hazardous Waste Pollution; Environmental Security; and Sustainable Lifestyles. The first module was based on the [Faith for Earth: A Time for Action launched in October 2020](#).
- Collaborated with the [Major Group for Children and Youth](#) (MGCY) and the thematic facilitators of the Faith and Environment Working Group to forge a roadmap to draw active participation in the Faith for Earth Coalition Youth Council, alongside leads of the National Youth Councils and the Faith for Earth National Councilors in India, Lebanon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Triple Planetary Crises: Climate Change, Ecosystems Degradation, and Pollution & Waste

Climate Action

- Local Muslim social and faith leaders connected Islamic faith values to the natural environment and explored community engagement strategies. This was done during the *Imams, Mosques & Climate Change Workshop*: Faith for Earth, in partnership with [The Bahu Trust UK](#) and IFEES hosted the [Imams, Mosques & Climate Change Workshop](#) on 24 March 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya. As a result of the workshop, participants recognized that stronger commitments can be made to reduce wasting of water during ablution, littering around [Mosque compounds](#), food waste after prayers and on major religious observances/celebratory days, and committed to numerous pledges to enhance eco-friendly practices in their faith communities. The group were able to identify lacunae in the areas of environmental education, green spaces, responsible consumption, and religious festivals or observances, and demonstrated an understanding that sustainable environmental action at the local level requires innovative solutions to meet the limited financial resources.
- *Vatican Faith and Science: Towards COP26*: The Vatican, with the British and Italian Embassies to the Holy See, convened a series of virtual preparatory meetings facilitated by Wilton Park to enable faith leaders to share their faith's theology on care for the environment and to call on the international community and decision-makers [to raise ambition and step up climate action ahead of COP26](#). The consultation process culminated with an interfaith appeal submitted by Pope Francis to COP 26 presidency. Pope Francis' [address](#) urged other faith leaders and civil society to join the appeal. Faith for Earth was invited to take part as a UN advisor in these discussions.

- *Faith Actors at COP26*: The interfaith community joined governments, civil society and private institutions at COP26 in a remarkable demonstration of the impact of a multi-faith, multi-stakeholder approach to accelerate actions. This included: the [Talanoa Dialogue Session](#) creating a space to discern key advocacy points to push for climate action focusing on the next steps to achieve the goals set out in the Paris Agreement; a vigil by senior religious leaders gathered in Glasgow’s main square to launch the [Scottish Interfaith Week](#) where the [Glasgow Multi-Faith Declaration](#) – demanding those in power to put the Paris Agreement into effect- was read out; [a joint statement on climate and the environment calling](#) signed by eight national Muslim bodies and umbrella organizations in the UK and Ireland, representing a large number of the countries’ combined 2.7 million Muslim population, urging world leaders to act decisively on the climate crisis; and a [webinar](#) by Ecojesuit reflecting their experience at COP26.
- *Faith & Sustainable Cities*: [Making Cities Resilient 2030 \(MCR2030\): Engaging Academia and Faith Actors to Strengthen Cities Resilience to Climate Change and Disasters](#) stressed an urgent need for effective multi-stakeholder relationships to accelerate the progress of resilience building at the local level, to bring cities on to the resilience pathway towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, among other environmental action agreements focusing on disaster reduction and urban planning.

Nature Action

- Faith for Earth published a [Strategy for Engagement: The Role of Faith Leaders and Faith-Based Organisations in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration \(2021-2030\)](#) highlighting the necessity of faith actors in overcoming the barriers stated in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration calling for faith communities to leverage their social and political influences towards ecosystem restoration.
- [Partnership with WWF-UK Beliefs & Values Programme](#) on the issue of faith and environmental sustainability, looking at the implementation of the goals of the [Strategy for Engagement](#), mapping projects on Nature-Based Solutions, faith owned assets, support faith groups active at the UN level around nature related advocacy, and more. In 2022, this partnership will focus on research around faith-based tree planting in Kenya and other countries, map projects on nature-based solutions, implement the Faith Plans Programme, and identify ways to leverage the Faith for Earth National Coordination Hubs established in India, Ethiopia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, and Ethiopia.

Chemicals & Pollution Action

- Launched the Multifaith Working Group on Pollution to facilitate a global interfaith response to the pollution crisis with the aim of engaging the faith community in addressing pollution issues, mobilising the power and influence of faith leaders and communities particularly at a grassroots level, identifying critical challenges and providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge and learning globally, regionally and locally. The objectives for the year were to:
 - Formulate a Concept Note for the Working Group on Pollution Action and launch the Multi-faith Action Group on Pollution;
 - Conduct a Global Mapping of faith actors engaged in Pollution Action worldwide to identify priority areas and region/country of impact. Solicit interest by FBOs to constitute specific Task Teams;

- Design and develop a Catalogue and/or Faith-Based Guidelines to address the plastic and waste crises; and
- Formulate Sub-Action Groups with clear output and means of implementation based on the priority areas identified through the mapping exercise, engaging faith-based partners.

Faith and Food

- The Faith + Food Coalition (FFC) presented an interfaith voices at the UN Food System Summit, hosting five separate [interfaith, multi-stakeholder dialogues](#) corresponding to each of the [five Action Tracks of the UN Food System Summit](#) exploring how faith communities - including Indigenous communities - can support the transformation of global food systems for sustainable, accessible, equitable, and regenerative. The dialogue series resulted in an [Interfaith Statement](#) calling for greater involvement of faith and spirituality for equitable food systems.
- Islam and Food Systems: [Position Paper](#) explores the current approach to food and development, calling for the incorporation of halal and tayyib foods and food systems that encourage the implementation of farming practices with guidance from Qur'an and Sunnah.

Faith for Earth National Coordination Hubs: India; Lebanon; Bosnia & Herzegovina

Faith for Earth and the United Religions Initiative (URI) launch the [Faith for Earth National Coordination Hubs](#) in India, Lebanon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This partnership, along with key local entities, endeavors to identify, inform and equip faith leaders and their communities with the resources to respond effectively to the climate crisis at the local and regional level, training social and faith leaders to accomplish this- [The Faith for Earth Councilors](#).

[The National Coordination Hub in India](#), in cooperation with the UNEP India Office, Religion World and Shristi, launched a [mapping exercise](#) involving a group of 70+ FBOs in and around Delhi representing seven world religions as well as interfaith organizations and Indigenous groups. [The Faith for Earth Councilors Programme](#) resulted in the [Value Education Olympiad by ISKON](#) that sought to empower students with strong value systems that guide them in decision-making and using their knowledge and skills for betterment of society and the environment. The Olympiad involved 2,30,000 Students from 20,300 Schools in 15 Countries. As well as a partnership with Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur (SRMD) to develop an interactive environmental programme for children and teenagers focused on enhancing a culture of compassion to help engage and empower the next generation of leaders towards environment and sustainability initiatives- the Faith for Earth Empathy Leadership (FEEL) Programme.

Publications

1. [UNEP Faith for Earth Strategy](#)
2. [Faith for Earth Coalition](#)
 - a. [Our Sacred Commitment](#)
 - b. [Skálholt III: Recommendations](#)
 - c. [The Role of Faith, Values and Ethics in Strengthening Action for Nature and Environmental Governance](#)

- d. [The Role of Environmental and Spiritual Ethics In Global Environmental Governance: Policy Brief](#)
3. [Strategy for Engagement: The Role of Faith Leaders and Faith-Based Organisations in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration \(2021-2030\)](#)
4. [The Faith for Earth Councillors Programme in India](#)
5. [Faith Action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Progress and Outlook](#)
6. [Faith and Science: An Appeal for COP26](#)

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

In 2021, UNICEF continued its whole-of-organization engagement with faith partners, including the roll out of the Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families, and Communities (FPCC) Global Initiative, which was launched in 2018. Religions for Peace and the Joint Learning Initiative are FPCC’s core partners.

The FPCC Initiative aims to re-evaluate and re-shape current approaches to faith engagement and to institute system-wide change for more strategic, equitable, effective, and sustainable ways of establishing and maintaining faith-based partnerships with faith actors towards improving the lives of children, families, and communities. The FPCC Initiative seeks to move country offices away from project-based engagements to re-think how UNICEF understands and supports partnerships with faith actors.

Under the FPCC umbrella, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), RfP and JLI released *UNICEF’s Global Programme Guidance on faith engagement*, aiming at equipping UNICEF staff with tools for strategic engagement with faith actors, especially in the areas of social and behavior change.

Country level collaboration, which lies at the core of the FPCC partnership, continued to yield results. A tangible example can be found in [Kenya](#), where UNICEF has partnered with religious leaders in Garissa County to tackle vaccine hesitancy.

In November 2021 the FPCC launched its “masters” training model in collaboration with an African-based training institute known as CORAT. The model has set out to train a core group of experienced faith actors in the principles and purpose of FPCC and Mind-Heart Dialogue approach so that, in turn, they will be able to train and coordinate post-training mentorship for about 12 facilitators in each country to form a National Mind-Heart Dialogue Team.

Throughout November and December of 2021— the Training of Trainers was rolled out over the course of four days to learn and experience the Mind-Heart Dialogue methodology of FPCC in eight FPCC pilot countries— Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Zambia, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Sierra Leone. Across all eight countries, over 80 Faith actors participated in the Mind-Heart Dialogue training. Moreover, the trainings included people not only representing a variety of religions, such as Christianity and Islam, but also other identities. The country-level trainings were facilitated by teams composed of women, men, and youth faith leaders of diverse faiths and identities.

The focus of the FPCC partnership with RfP and JLI/FBOs is now on the establishment of country level MFACCs (Multi-Faith Action committees) to be linked with National Coordination mechanisms – including national Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) committees.

UNICEF also partnered closely with faith-based organizations on advocacy regarding COVID-19 and its impact on children. For example, several faith partners joined UNICEF last World Immunization Week, lending their unique positioning to the theme ‘Vaccines brings us closer’.

More specifically, the World Council of Churches appointed nine of its senior-most leaders as [Vaccine Champions](#).

UNICEF launched a thought partnership platform on immunization including 10 faith partners of diverse religious affiliations to discuss UNICEF's advocacy strategy on COVID-19 vaccines and co-create activities to realize it.

Together with WHO and Religions for Peace, UNICEF co-convened a webinar series on COVID-19 Vaccines communications [part 1](#) [part 2](#).

On 30 November, UNICEF participated in the EVAC Solutions Summit event '[Engaging Faith Leaders and Faith Communities to end violence against children](#)' spotlighting examples of partnerships the role of faith actors in tackling violence against children. The event was convened by World Vision and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

Faith partners have featured prominently in the inaugural [Global Forum for Children and Youth](#), convened by UNICEF on 7, 8 and 9 December 2021. The faith angle was present across CY21 sessions: the World Council of Churches presented a commitment on climate action during CY21's opening plenary and Arigatou discussed the pandemic's impact on children's mental health and spiritual wellbeing. At least four of the Forum's community sessions were organized by faith-based organizations. Finally, several faith leaders, including the SGs of Religions for Peace and World Council of Churches sent video messages to the Forum's World Leaders Stage.

UNICEF participated in the World Conference of the [World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy](#), organized by Religions for Peace in Lindau, Germany, in October 2021. During the conference, UNICEF discussed its long track record of working side by side with religious communities to promote social and behavioral change in favor of children.

UNICEF co-hosted the 2021 [World Day of Prayer and Action for Children](#) in partnership with Arigatou International. The event, which took place at EXPO Dubai on 19 November 2021, was a celebration of World Children's Day and launched the *Wear my Shoes Campaign*. This interfaith initiative aims at mobilizing people of faith to advocate for the immediate return for children to school and for the prioritization of their mental health, social and spiritual wellbeing during this especially challenging time. UNICEF joined Arigatou and more than 20 faith-inspired organizations in issuing a statement calling for with asks to faith communities, governments, and international organizations.

Faith engagement considerations are being mainstreamed across all of UNICEF's Global Advocacy priorities laid out on the new strategic plan that commences on January 1st 2022: Immunization; Education; Mental Health; and Climate Change & WASH.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

In 2021, UNFPA continued to work closely with faith actors at the global and country level to protect and promote the rights and choices of the most vulnerable population in accordance with the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action (ICPD PoA).

At the global level, UNFPA, as a Co-Chairs of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development, together with the UN Office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) and the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), continued to play a key role in promoting a common UN system-wide approach to intercultural and interreligious dialogues.

Among others, UNFPA actively engaged in high-level events on gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence throughout 2021. These include:

- the High-level Opening session of the 7th Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs, titled “Multi-stakeholder collaboration to accelerate Gender Equality, Equity and Justice”.
- The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) side event “Reclaiming Gender Justice: countering national regional and global backlashes”, co-organized by ACT Alliance, Act Church of Sweden and Side by Side with the co-sponsorship of UNFPA, Sweden and Argentina. The event sought to address the push back on women’s rights and gender justice, focusing in particular, on progressing SRHR, reforming discriminatory family law, and tackling Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).
- the High-Level Roundtable on Fiscal Justice and SRHR “Bridging the Gap: The Importance of Fiscal Justice for Achieving Women and Girls’ Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights”, where UNFPA delivered opening remarks.

Furthermore, as the co-lead of the Generation Equality Forum’s Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, UNFPA worked together with faith actors to facilitate their engagement as commitment makers. As part of these efforts, UNFPA supported the Multi-Faith Advisory Council to the UN in organizing a side event at the Paris Generation Equality Forum in July 2021. The event, entitled: “The F Words: Faith, Feminisms and freedom to choose”, focused on faith and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and aimed to demonstrate how feminism/rights and faith discourse and action not only are not mutually exclusive but can achieve transformative change. The event showcased the innovative ways that FBOs and others come together to fight regression, repression and misinformation and realize progress.

UNFPA convened the webinar "A Matter of Faith: Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a Gender-based Violence Prevention Strategy in Faith Settings", in collaboration with the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI). Aiming to promote an open conversation on the potential and the challenges of engagement by faith actors on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), the webinar was part of a series of webinars co-hosted by OHCHR on “Gender-based Violence (GBV) in the Context of COVID-19 and Beyond”. The almost 300 attendees from around the globe contributed to the success of the webinar in generating an open conversation on the potential and challenges of engagement by faith actors on CSE, as well as

promoting CSE as a gender transformative approach that can contribute to ending violence against women and girls. A document on the webinar's "Learning Outcomes" and one on the "Q&A" were developed.

At the country level, UNFPA partnered with FBOs as implementing partners in 49 countries in 6 regions, focusing on sexual and reproductive health service delivery, youth and adolescents, and gender equality. By mobilizing and promoting dialogue among communities, UNFPA further contributed to strengthening social cohesion and resilience.

Below are a few, selected country examples from across the regions.

In **Somalia**, UNFPA engaged religious leaders in an advocacy campaign for the adoption and implementation of national and regional level laws on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

In **Bangladesh**, UNFPA partnered with Dan Church Aid on the "Girl Shine" programme, an evidence-based curriculum designed to give young Rohingya girls the skills, knowledge, social networks, and self-confidence to help protect themselves from Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

In **Indonesia**, UNFPA built the capacity of Religious and Community Leaders on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and gender through the Nahdlatul Ulama (a local Islamic organization and the largest Islamic organization in the world).

In **South Africa**, the local organization Umthombo Wempilo Institute conducted sensitization of community actors – including parents, traditional and religious leaders and out of school youth - on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) through community dialogues.

In **Uganda**, UNFPA partnered with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to provide lifesaving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services in the refugee settlements of Bidi bidi, Invepi, Palorinya, Kangwali and Adjumani.

With UNFPA's support, the Inter-Religious Council of **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, organized 4 inter-faith online public events contributing to Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) stigma alleviation.

World Bank Group (WBG)

The World Bank Group (WBG) has collaborated with faith-based actors over the years to join forces in the fight against extreme poverty through information sharing, policy dialogue, operational collaboration, and institutional partnerships.

In 2021, the Bank fostered collaboration with a broad range of faith actors to advance shared development priorities, notably around the Human Capital Project (HCP), Women & Youth, Adaptation & Resilience, Fragility, Conflict & Violence, and the COVID-19 pandemic response.

The World Bank Group's support has helped over 100 developing countries save lives and detect, prevent, and respond to COVID-19. Over the past year, the Bank's support has focused on helping countries address the crisis and begin to transition to recovery through saving lives, protecting the poor, securing foundations of the economy, and strengthening policies and institutions for resilience.

The Bank's financing is also helping support client countries to jump start a green, resilient, and inclusive recovery with [operations supporting vaccine rollout](#) approved in 66 developing countries amounting to \$7.4 billion. In addition, \$20 billion has been availed to developing countries to finance the purchase and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

The Bank has emphasized partnerships in its COVID-19 recovery efforts. We are partnering with the Africa Union to provide desperately needed vaccines and support the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT), which helps countries purchase and deploy vaccines for up to 400 million people. We have also partnered with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), WHO, and WTO to form the Multilateral Leaders Task Force on COVID-19 to boost access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics. Other stakeholders, including FBOs, have been key partners in the Bank's efforts to implement a fast, flexible, and broad-based response to the COVID-19 crisis.

During the 2021 Annual/Spring Meetings and the Civil Society Policy Forum (CSPF) of the WBG and the IMF, the Bank's management conducted high-level dialogues with faith leaders to discuss the role of faith in development. The [Pope sent a message](#) for the Spring Meetings that called on attendees to discuss a "model of "recovery" capable of generating new, more inclusive and sustainable solutions to support the real economy, assisting individuals and communities to achieve their deepest aspirations and the universal common good". The meetings - and subsequent policy engagements - provided a platform for knowledge sharing on the impact of faith-based organization work on the COVID-19 response and related sectors.

The Bank strengthened and deepened relationships with faith actors and foster an increased understanding of the role of FBOs in development by exploring opportunities to engage around shared priorities, especially the HCP, IDA replenishment, and climate change. Advocacy efforts from faith actors continue to shift and inform our operations.

The Bank continues to engage key faith partners through the **Moral Imperative group**, a platform that strengthens dialogue with the World Bank Group to advance shared goals. In addition to facilitating monthly meetings with the Moral Imperative Steering Committee, the Bank supported

a Moral Imperative led session at the CSPF that focused on advocating for engaging with faith actors as key partners for shared sustainable development objectives.

The Bank was a member of the Steering Group and an Advisor to **PaRD**, an organization that brings together more than 100 governmental and intergovernmental entities to engage with CSOs and FBOs on the SDGs. In addition, as a member of the **IATF-Religion**, the Bank met regularly with FBOs affiliated with the UN to advance the SDGs.

Finally, the Bank continued to strengthen knowledge sharing with faith actors by collaborating with partners to build a body of evidence around shared priorities. To this end, the Bank convened and facilitated meetings of the **WBG Research Agenda Working Group (RAWG)** focused on how faith's unique reach and trust can influence critical social values for lasting impact in development. The RAWG - consisting of senior representatives from the UN system, the WBG, FBOs, faith leaders, and academia – is developing reports that will inform data collection and evidence building about the role of faith and faith-based organizations in the delivery of the Bank's goals and priorities.

In 2022, the Bank plans to continue these strong engagements, further develop operations on the ground with FBO partners, and reinvigorate the Moral Imperative to collaborate towards a green, resilient, and inclusive recovery.

World Health Organization (WHO)

Throughout history, religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and faith communities at all levels, have played a key role in health emergency preparedness and response, and in many places, in ongoing health service delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of partnerships in responding to and preparing for health emergencies. In late 2020, the [WHO Information Network for Epidemics \(EPI-WIN\)](#) team launched three ‘Communities of Practice’ (COPs) to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange with faith partners around: communications, research and learning, and development of a WHO strategy for engagement. In 2021, the COPs and the EPI-WIN team continued joint work to strengthen communication and advocacy activities in response to COVID-19 and for vaccine equity, finalized the [WHO Strategy for Engaging Religious Leaders, Faith-Based Organizations and Faith Communities in Health Emergencies](#), and co-hosted a global conference with Religions for Peace bringing together faith leaders, partners and experts from around the world to reflect on a range of lessons learned and areas of collaboration. In addition, WHO published several faith-related guidance including:

- [Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19 \(4 November 2021\)](#)
- [World Health Organization strategy for engaging religious leaders, faith-based organizations and faith communities in health emergencies \(3 November 2021\)](#)
- [Holding gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic: WHO policy brief \(2 August 2021\)](#)
- [Safe Eid al Adha practices in the context of COVID-19 \(13 July 2021\)](#)
- [Safe Ramadan practices in the context of COVID-19, interim guidance \(7 April 2021\)](#)

COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Series

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the loss of too many lives and immeasurable suffering around the world. As the global community battles to control the pandemic, it is clear that equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines must remain a priority. Faith partners continue to play a critical role in advocating for fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. Co-hosted by WHO, UNICEF and Religions for Peace this webinar series discussed the role and impact of faith partners in championing vaccine equity, access, and uptake and reflected on the importance of trust and communication in overcoming barriers to COVID-19 vaccination.

Global Conference

During the COVID-19 pandemic, religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and faith communities have partnered with WHO and national governments to reduce the harms of the virus: sharing information, promoting health interventions, providing spiritual and psychosocial care, and delivering essential services and supplies. In autumn 2021, WHO and Religions for Peace co-hosted the global conference [Strengthening National Responses to Health Emergencies: WHO, Religious Leaders, Faith-based Organizations, Faith Communities and National Governments](#) to share experiences, examples, and lessons-learned from these partnerships. The conference focused on three themes: *Spiritual Care during Times of Crisis*, *Collaboration in Health Emergencies: WHO faith partners and national governments*, and *Communication and Advocacy for Vaccine Equity, Access, and Uptake*. With over 65 panelists, including leaders and representatives from local, national, and international faith and health organizations involved in COVID-19 responses, the conference looked at the diverse contributions of faith partners in the

COVID-19 response and the ways in which WHO and partners can continue to strengthen preparedness and response in the future. A forthcoming conference report will be available on [the conference webpage](#).

Strategy for engagement

Published in November 2021 the [World Health Organization strategy for engaging religious leaders, faith-based organizations and faith communities in health emergencies](#) sets out a framework to enable more effective responses by strengthening collaboration between the WHO, faith partners and national governments resulting in more people being better protected from health emergencies and enjoying better health and well-being, including improved trust and social cohesion.

The WHO strategy seeks to support this intention to strengthen collaboration both now, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact communities around the world, and in the future as we collectively prepare for other health crises. Country case studies explore the innovative ways in which WHO and faith partners support national governments' efforts to address misinformation and mistrust, communication, psychological, mental and social needs, and the promotion of protective measures, vaccine access and uptake.

Kenya

Early in the pandemic, the Kenya Ministry of Health created an interfaith council with broad responsibilities for creating protocols for safe conduct of faith-based services and gatherings. With the creation of almost 50 county-based subcommittees, the Council became the primary mediator between the religious sector and government on faith-based activities related to COVID-19 risks. With the Interfaith Council as a coordination hub, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and interfaith groups engaged with the Ministry and WHO in a wide range of pandemic-related activities including promoting safe practices for worship, technically accurate and tailored health messages, and supporting vaccination.

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, faith-based organizations have a long history of responding to health needs. The introduction of COVID-19 strengthened these partnerships. Christian, Muslim, and African traditionalist organizations are among partners supporting work by the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), WHO and UNICEF. Religious leaders are often among the most respected figures in their communities and faith-based organizations play a powerful role in shaping attitudes, opinions, and behaviors, and many have already established, pre-COVID relationships with health organizations. Faith-based organizations play an enormous role in Zimbabwe's pandemic-related communication campaigns and interventions including formative research, social listening, information dissemination, behavior change, and addressing circulating misinformation. Faith partners also sponsored capacity building sessions across a range of COVID-19 response functions, training thousands of volunteers, religious leaders, and counselors.

The Philippines

The Philippines Department of Health and WHO reached out to religious leaders and faith partners at the beginning of the COVID-19 response. Identifying ways to help religious institutions protect their communities, the Department and WHO conducted meetings with faith leaders and

formalized partnerships with them on several COVID-19 response functions, including communication and vaccine advocacy. Working at national and local levels, faith-based organizations and the government created memoranda of agreement that laid out specific roles best suited to the assets of each partner. Faith partners in the Philippines have fulfilled a range of health protection activities including transportation services for front line workers and supplying food and isolation shelters. Most prominent among their actions have been lending the government their facilities on religious grounds for vaccine clinics, adapting messages into plain and first-languages, and offering services for psychosocial health.

[Nigeria](#)

Nigeria's COVID-19 response is founded on a long history of government, WHO and faith partnerships to fight diseases including Ebola, HIV/AIDS, and polio. Specifically, its current "whole of society" response is built on a model that achieved polio-free status for Nigeria in 2020. Diverse and interfaith groups have participated in varied COVID-19 interventions, including communication and responding to misinformation. Religious leaders have gone door-to-door advocating for vaccine uptake. Interfaith groups use messages to create materials such as sermon guides and adapt messages and materials into understandable dialects and languages. In addition, faith-based organizations respond to misinformation circulating in religious communities using respectful, peer-to-peer conversations.

Looking forward to 2022

WHO recognizes the importance of partnerships that are sustained and institutionalized beyond COVID-19 to guide future emergency preparedness and response and to strengthen universal health care. To this end, WHO is working to formalize a WHO Faith Network in the context of broader goals to establish a more just and equitable society.

Key Links

- [WHO: Strengthening partnerships with the faith community](#)
- [WHO and Religions for Peace global conference on strengthening national responses to health emergencies](#)
- [World Health Organization strategy for engaging religious leaders, faith-based organizations and faith communities in health emergencies](#)

Annex I: List of the UN Interagency Task Force Members 2021

UN Agencies

International Labor Organization (ILO)

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

United Nations Counter Terrorism Executive Secretariat (UNCTED)

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

United Nations Department of Global Communications (UNDPI NGO)

United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPIA)

United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (UN Office of Legal Affairs)

United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG)

United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG on Violence Against Children)

United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC)

United Nations Volunteers Program (UNV)

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN)

World Bank Group (WBG)

World Food Program (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

Annex II: Multifaith Advisory Council Membership 2021

Organization

ACT Alliance
Adventist Development and Relief Agency
Al-Azhar University: Centre for Population Studies
Arigatou International
Baha'i International Community
Bhumi Global
Caritas Internationalis
Church of Latter Day Saints
Church of Sweden
Finn Church Aid/FCA
Global Interfaith WASH Alliance
Global One
GreenFaith

INERELA - International Network of Religious Leaders
Living With and Impacted by HIV and AIDS

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science

Islamic Relief Worldwide
Jewish Theological Seminary, USA
Joint Learning Initiative
KAICIID Dialogue Centre
Musawah
Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV)
Nahdatul Ulama
Parliament of the World's Religions
Religions for Peace
Sant Egidio Community
Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society
Tanenbaum
The Archbishop of Canterbury
The Focolare Movement
The Interfaith Center of Sustainable Development
The International Center for Religion and Diplomacy

Representative

Mr. Rudelmar Bueno de Faria
Mr. Jonathan Duffy
Prof. Dr. Gamal I. Serour
Rebeca Rios-Kohn
Ms. Bani Dugal
Mr. Gopal Patel
Mr. Joseph Donnelly
Mr. Ryan Koch

Ms. Tarja Kantola
Sadhviji Bhagvati Saraswati
Dr. Husna Ahmed
Fr. Fletcher Harper
Rev. Phumzile Mabizela

Dr. Fazlun Khaled

Waseem Ahmed
Rabbi Burton Vizotsky
Ms. Kirsten Laursen Muth
Mr. Faisal Bin Muammar
Ms. Zaynah Anwar
Ms. Ani Zonneveld
Ms. Alisa Wahid
Ms. Audrey Kitagawa
Azza Karam
Prof. Andrea Bartoli
Imam Sayed Razawi
Rev. Mark Fowler
Mr. Jack Palmer-White
Renata Dias
Rabbi Yonatan Neril
Mr. James Patton

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation
United Religions Initiative
World Council of Churches
World Evangelical Alliance
World Evangelical Alliance Sustainability Center
World Jewish Congress
World Vision International
World YMCA

Dr. Mohamed El Sanousi
Ms. Debra Boudreax
Kiran Bali
Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca
Christine MacMillan
Matthias K. Boehning
Yfat Barak-Cheney
Daniela Buzducea
Casey Harden

Annex III: UNIATF ToR

Terms of Reference for coordination/convening of the UN Interagency Taskforce on Religion

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development was set up in 2010 as part of the UN Development Group UNDG, at the behest of 8 UN Principals and the then WB President.

The functions of the Interagency Task Force on Religion, in accordance with its own Terms of Reference, are to:

- *Institutional Memory/Knowledge Management*: Cull and share guidance on activities/initiatives, as well as lessons learned around UN system engagement with religion and faith-based actors;
- *Capacity Building*: Build UN system staff capacities on/around intersections of religion with development, human rights and peace and security dynamics;
- *Guidance and Oversight*: Maintain a system-wide database of vetted faith-based NGO partners,
- *Policy Advice*: Provide strategic policy guidance to respective UN entities and leadership thereof, upon request.
- *Coordination and collaboration*: Provide a forum for promoting and strengthening interagency cooperation, including through joint initiatives, programming and advocacy.

UN IATF CO-CHAIRS AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT. TERMS OF SERVICE.

- For the period 2020-2022, two UN entities will co-chair the UN IATF. A third UN entity will serve as executive secretariat:
 - In 2020, the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (OSAPG) will serve as co-Chairs. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) will provide support as executive secretariat.
 - In 2021, UNAOC and UNFPA will serve as co-Chairs. OSAPG will provide support as executive secretariat.
 - In 2022, UNFPA and OSAPG will serve as co-Chairs. UNAOC will provide support as executive secretariat.

DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CO-CHAIRS

- The co-Chairs convene the meetings of the IATF (at minimum 3 times per year), propose the IATF meeting agendas, co-lead on conducting the meetings and draft meeting notes for circulation and feedback by the members.
- The co-Chairs of the Task Force effectively serve to support Task Force Members towards some form of coherence in outreach with FBOs, in line with strategic advisement consonant with the Task Force's Guidelines of

engagement with FBOs.

- In that regard, the co-Chairs will liaise not only internally with the UN system members, but also with partner faith-based NGOs and religious actors.
- For any given engagement by the IATF in all different modalities including side- events, convening of meetings, strategic learning, and any other engagements, as appropriate, the co-Chairs and the executive secretariat will agree on their respective roles and responsibilities regarding the organization thereof, including which entity will be in the lead. The lead will reach out to the two other two entities for their required support.

DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT:

The executive secretariat will provide support to the co-Chairs by:

- Ensure effective coordination and communication within the Task Force, between the Task Force and the MFAC, and the wider faith-based community, including by:
 - Disseminating news, announcements, publications (by UN entities, FBO partners and other related/relevant institutions).
 - Receiving communications from UN IATF partners and external partners and sharing them with the co-Chairs.
- Providing updates and oversight for the global Directory of FBO partners to the UN system.
- Providing formal representational functions if and when required.

The co-Chairs and executive secretariat support UN system members of the Task Force to deliver, jointly, on each of the following responsibilities of the Task Force:

Knowledge Management:

- Ensure regular updates/briefings by the different members are held, and minutes thereof prepared, such that the Task Force is convened at least 3 times a year (including virtually).
- Facilitate and advise UN members as to opportunities for joint advocacy events taking place under respective UN auspices and suggest synergies and FBO speakers/partners where appropriate/requested.
- Prepare an Annual Report showcasing highlights of UN members' efforts to deal with religious dynamics and engage with religious actors and disseminate among governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.
- Provide yearly inputs on behalf of UN Task Force into SG Report on Intercultural and Interreligious activities for Peace.

Capacity Building:

- Hosting, organizing and facilitating a Strategic Learning Exchange for and with IATF and FBO partners at least once a year.
- Organize specific training sessions for UN colleagues and FBO partners upon request.
- Seek to instigate and to support (including logistically) joint initiatives

undertaken by several UN IATF members at different moments of the year (see FAQ).

Guidance/Oversight over Database:

- The co-Chairs and the executive secretariat will undertake regular updates of the Database.

Policy Advice:

- Upon request, the co-Chairs respond to requests for policy guidance which can include inputs to briefing notes or speeches, answering questions about UN system-wide engagement from sister UN system entities, and/or advice and answer questions from and about FBO partners.

Support for the Multi-Faith Advisory Council

- The co-Chairs and the Executive Secretariat will provide support to the Multi Faith Advisory Council and facilitate the interactions between the MFAC and the Task Force.
- Keep the Council connected with regular communications and information sharing.
- Co-organize with Council members a yearly Kofi Annan Faith Briefing at a mutually agreed time.

Annex IV: MFAC ToR 2021

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MULTI-FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (IATF-Religion) was set up in 2010, to provide policy guidance around engaging with faith-based actors, deepen UN system staff capacities on/around intersections of religion with the UN pillars of development, human rights and peace and security dynamics, as well as provide strategic policy guidance on the above.

The Multi-faith Advisory Council (MFAC) was convened by the UN IATF-Religion in September 2018 as an informal and voluntary entity, composed of the UN system's faith-based partners, reflecting the diversity of religions, regional and national presence, and covering thematic areas which mirror the UN's mandate.

Thematic areas of focus agreed shared strategic priorities between UN and faith-based and faith-inspired partners²¹ for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace Agenda. The major themes are prioritized by the MFAC in its bi-annual work plan:

- Environment (including forests, climate change and resource efficiency)
- Migration (including children, trafficking, education)
- Gender Justice
- Financing for Development
- Peacemaking and Security (including food security, peacebuilding and reconciliation, and humanitarian engagement)
- Health

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MULTI-FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The MFAC will provide strategic advice and support to the IATF-Religion on the prioritized thematic areas in order to:

- Assist the United Nations system through strengthened human rights-based policy advocacy within and outside of the UN system.
- Assist in coordinating direct and systematic outreach, interaction and engagement with faith-based and faith-inspired entities, and between faith-based NGOs and UN entities.
- Enhance focus on and knowledge around religious literacy, representation and dynamics at and within the United Nations.
- Encourage greater partnership and joint actions between UN entities and faith-based/inspired actors; and
- Serve the greater faith-based community to understand the UN mandate and engagement.

The MFAC shall abide by the rules, regulations and principles of the United Nations, and be composed according to the common guidelines for NGO engagement in the UN system.

²¹ As agreed during the UN-FBO "Strategic Retreat on Engaging with religious actors for the Realization of the SDGs" April 5, 2017

To that end, the DUTIES/ RESPONSIBILITIES of the Multi-Faith Advisory Council shall include:

- Taking the lead to co-design and implement (at least) one annual joint IATF-Religion and Faith-based Organization Strategic Review of Partnerships, as well as contribute to the Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and International Affairs.
- Promoting and raising awareness on the work of the United Nations within their respective networks and constituencies globally through advocacy and outreach initiatives - using both traditional and new media.
- Serving as, and advising as regards to, speakers at United Nations meetings, workshops and conferences on the above agreed upon themed areas, as and when required by the IATF-Religionmembers.
- Providing a short Report annually on its activities, assessment of impact, and recommendations to enhance policy coordination and collaboration, to be included in the IATF-Religion Annual Report, which is shared with the UN System and diverse partner entities.

MEMBERSHIP AND ELIGIBILITY

- The Multi-faith Advisory Council shall be composed of faith-based and/or faith-inspired legally registered NGOs (at least in one member state) that have partnered (or are partnering) with the UN on advocacy, and/or are implementing partners of/with UN system entity members of the IATF- Religion, with a preference for those with, or in the process of seeking ECOSOC accreditation.
- Members will act within the capacity as Multi-faith Advisory Council members, and officially represent such, as and when requested or approved by the IATF-Religion.

SELECTION OF MEMBERS

Multi-faith Advisory Council Members will be selected by UN system members of the IATF-Religion according to the “Criteria for Religious Engagement” developed by the UN Task Force. Each UN member of the IATF-Religion will be asked to nominate between 3-5 faith-based/inspired partners. The organization nominated by more than one entity will be prioritized for the short list. The MFAC may also suggest to the IATF-Religion potential faith-based/inspired organizations to become members of the MFAC, which meet or not the eligibility criteria above and that bring an added- value to the purpose of the partnership.

In addition to an established track record of acting in conformity with UN values and principles, and giving preference to those with UN-ECOSOC accreditation, the criteria for selection of which organizations serve as Multi-faith Advisory Council members require a balance of the following:

- Religious organizational representation (i.e. covering diverse religions/faiths/denominations, ecumenical and interfaith).
- Thematic area(s) of expertise and interventions (development, humanitarian, human rights and peace and security).
- Gender.
- Youth; and

- Presence (global, regional and local).

STRUCTURE

The Advisory Council should not exceed forty faith-based/inspired Representatives.

The Members may choose up to four Co-Chairs if deemed helpful to communication among each other. The Co-Chairs should represent diverse faith-based entities.

TERM

MFAC members will be appointed for a two-year term, renewable for two additional years. It is desirable to replace only a subset of the membership every two years in order to keep the institutional memory forward.

DECISION-MAKING

The deliberations of the MFAC are based on mutual respect and recognize the diversity of the work and the discernment of faith actors, as UN member states also do. Decision as MFAC will be made primarily on a consensual basis, and if and when necessary, each member of the Council shall have one equal vote. Any externally appointed advisors/observers will have observer status and no voting power.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UN IATF-RELIGION TOWARDS THE MULTI FAITH ADVISORY GROUP

- Make available materials and information on the work of the United Nations and emerging issues related to religion, religious engagement, and each UN Task Force relevant report, data or analysis.
- Encourage the inclusion of Multi-faith Advisory Council members in activities and initiatives of the United Nations' members of IATF-Religion.
- Disseminate the relevant publications and program materials and outcomes of the Multi-faith Advisory Council members among the UN entities and operational offices.
- Provide policy, strategic, tactical advice and facilitation/mediation and connectivity with and within UN entities, to Multi-Faith Advisory Council members if/when requested.
- When available, UN Task Force members may provide resources to support the implementation of Multi-Faith Advisory Council Members' activities based on mutual consent between the organization and the UN entity/entities. However, members of the Multi-faith Advisory Council will not receive any remuneration from the IATF-Religion.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE UN IATF-RELIGION

The Multi-Faith Advisory Council members will communicate with all members of the IATF-Religion and can do so either individually (keeping all members copied/informed), or choose to do so via the IATF- Religion Conveners/Chairs.

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Members of the Multi-Faith Advisory Council will be removed by the IATF-Religion members, if the UN entity/entities deem a misuse the UN logo, flag or engagement in activities contrary to the Organization's principles.

Annex V: TORs Chairs of MFAC to the UNIATF-R

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CHAIRS OF THE MULTI-FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE UN INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON RELIGION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

The Multi-faith Advisory Council to the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (IATF-Religion) is an informal and voluntary entity, composed of the UN system's faith-based partners, reflecting the diversity of religions, regional and national presence, and covering thematic areas which mirror the UN's mandate. The role of the Multi-faith Advisory Council is, inter alia, to provide strategic advice and support to the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development.

The following Terms of Reference define the duties and responsibilities of the Multi-faith Advisory Council's Chairs who constitute the Council's leadership.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHAIRS

The Chairs serve as the focal point for communication and collaboration with the IATF-Religion.

The Chairs are responsible for resourcing, and/or coordinating resourcing efforts, to fund activities and operations undertaken by the Council.

The Chairs are responsible for the facilitation of the Council's meetings and must ensure that the Council meets, in person or via conference calls, on a regular basis.

The Chairs are responsible for facilitating, coordinating, and ensuring the initiation of activities undertaken by the Council to fulfill the Council's Terms of Reference.

The Chairs are responsible for coordinating the Council's outreach, communications, and mediation to ensure the Council acts as one and speaks as one collective in its mission to advise the IATF-Religion and advance sustainable development.

The Chairs are accountable to the Multi-faith Advisory Council members and, as they are nominated by them, they are also responsible to honor their collective wish and speak only in their collective voice.

ELIGIBILITY AND NOMINATION

A total of four Chairs, with equal rights and responsibilities, shall be appointed from among the members of the Multi-Faith Advisory Council.

Any Chair must always be a member of the Multi-faith Advisory Council. If, for any reason, a Chair ceases to be a member of the Advisory Council per the Terms of Reference for the Multi-faith

Advisory Council, the Chair will cease to serve in that function and a new one will be nominated by the Council's members.

Members of the Multi-faith Advisory Council nominate candidates for Council's Chairs to IATF-Religion representatives. Of these nominations, IATF-Religion representatives choose and appoint four Chairs based on the IATF's Terms/Criteria of Engagement.

These Criteria require that the Chairs come from a diverse array of faith traditions and geographical regions and maintain a gender balance in line with the Council's overall goal of diversity and representativity.

TERM LENGTH

Chairs will serve for a period of two years effective from their appointment at the request of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development member organizations.

REFERENCES

Terms of Reference for the Multi-Faith Advisory Council

Annex VI: MFAC Report 2021



2021 Report of the Multi-Faith Advisory Council to the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development

Prepared by MFAC Co-chairs 2019-2021
Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, Bani Dugal, Gopal Patel, Husna Ahmad

CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Working groups**
 - 2.1. Gender Working Group**
 - 2.2. COVID 19 Working Group**
 - 2.3. Environment Working Group**
 - 2.4. Multilateralism Working Group**
- 3. Membership and Co-Chairs**
- 4. Reflections**
- 5. Conclusions**

Introduction

The purpose of this annual report is to give an outline of the activities and methodology of working as a Multi-faith Advisory Council for 2021.

The Co-chairs for this period were Mr. Rudelmar Bueno de Faria of Act Alliance, Ms. Bani Dugal of the Bahai international communities' UN office, Mr. Gopal Patel of Bhumi Global and Dr. Husna Ahmad of Global One. Our two-year term as Co-chairs of the MFAC ended in late 2021.

There are four UN -IATF co -chairs and the three entities that they represent have a rotational responsibility for the UN IATF Secretariat. For 2020 the Coordinator for the Executive Secretariat of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development was Ms. Simona Cruciani, Political Affairs officer at the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect and three other co- chairs are Ms. Caterina Tino, Faith and Culture Inter-governmental, Inter-Agency and Policy Dialogue Branch UNFPA, Ms. Nihal Saad Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson for the High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; Ms. Ana Jimenez, Political Advisor at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; and the UN-IATF Secretariat has been supported by Ms. Chuqiu Peng, Consultant, Policy and Strategy Division (PSD) at UNFPA.

In 2021, the Multi-faith Advisory Council strengthened its role to provide strategic advice and support to the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development. It focused attention on the need to clarify the relationship and terms of engagement of MFAC members to deepen UN system staff capacities on/around intersections of religion with relevant areas/issues needing attention in times of pandemic and uncertainties.

In this context, the MFAC promoted the revision/update of its Terms of Reference (ToR) to clarify issues around membership eligibility and accountability on joint principles and values. The revision generated a better understanding on the role of each of the parties and also better ways of communicating and engaging around commonly identified issues.

The IATF and MFAC members agreed to hold a thematic meeting/event in 2021, reflecting the discussion held in previous years on the four selected areas of engagement as defined in the 2020 MFAC/IATF Retreat.

With gender being one of the main issues of concern both to members of the MFAC and those of the IATF, a thematic meeting between the Council's members and members of IATF was held on 23 November 2021. Jointly organized by the key members of the IATF and the Gender Working Group of the MFAC, the meeting was attended by over 40 representatives and was held in accordance with Chatham House Rules, fulfilling the aim of creating a safe and enabling space for the frank exchange of views.

In framing the discussion, the participants underlined several key points, including the negative impact of Covid-19 on efforts to achieve gender equality thus far, and the importance of working with faith actors and their contribution to advancing gender equality within their constituencies. The Gender Working Group, established at MFAC's inception, was positively noted as a way to

ensure that the Council continuously works towards gender equality with its members. Challenges faced by faith actors were also listed, such as in advocating for issues of gender identity, gender violence and sexual and reproductive health. The secular nature of the United Nations and its ways of working was another challenge underlined, where the unique role of religion and engagement with faith leaders and faith-based organizations have at times been overlooked. The aim of the meeting was underlined, namely, to work together to expand horizons of constituencies - challenging the status quo and social norms that have led to gender injustices and advancing shared values through the development of strategies and concrete recommendations.

The following section describes the major actions/activities undertaken by the different MFAC working groups.

2 Working Groups:

The MFAC membership continued their thematic work through the four working groups that were set up in 2020. The UN 75 working group was replaced by the working group on multilateralism since the 75th anniversary of the UN had passed.

Below is a brief summary of each of the 4 working groups.

2.1. Gender Working group

The Gender Working Group held monthly meetings and while planning events met more frequently as necessary. There are two co-chairs Ani Zonneveld, Muslims for Progressive Values, and Casey Harden, World YWCA.

The focus of their work was to build on their efforts in the previous year and to hold an event for all members of MFAC and the IATF to address the nexus of gender and faith. Prior to the event the gender focused guidelines and questions; which had been developed as a tool to help ensure that discussion and work of the MFAC always includes a gender lens for use by individual organizations and collectively by MFAC, was sent to all members. The guiding questions are a mechanism to focus on gender inclusiveness, to enhance gender-responsive dialogue, programming and activities, and management/leadership by the individuals that represent their respective organizations on MFAC, when working together.

Additionally, the Gender Working Group continued to track and, as warranted, discuss the progress of the gender equality discussions at the UN such as at the CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) to determine opportunities to get involved.

2.2. COVID-19 Working Group

The Covid-19 Working Group continued to meet every month in 2021 to discuss religious responses during the pandemic. The co-chairs of the COVID -19 Working group were Ms. Alison Kelly of Act Alliance, Ms. Debra Boudreaux of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and Ms. Kirsten Laursen Muth of the Joint Learning Initiative.

In 2021 a highlight of the work of the Covid -19 Working Group was holding a joint event with

UNICEF on countering vaccine hesitancy and uptake.

During the course of 2021 the COVID WG continued to:

1. Collect, collate and share data and information on Faith and COVID-19 to reflect the collective response of the MFAC membership.
2. To interact with the different MFAC working groups to ensure common understanding, approaches and coherence around Faith and COVID-19 and explore the intersections with a broad range of human rights issues, including the MFAC thematic priorities.
3. Make values and evidence-based statements about the role and contribution of FBOs to the COVID response.
4. To contribute to multi-faith pandemic recovery strategies to promote a new paradigm for humanity, based on solidarity, inclusion and equality.

By the end of 2021 the goals for the COVID WG of serving as a resource for MFAC and UNIATF on the collective response of FBOs to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to express a faith perspective, and support faith engagement and potential partnerships and sharing of good practices among FBOs and the UN were accomplished. It was clear that the working group could be replaced by another since its goals had been achieved and the pandemic was now under control.

2.3 Environment Working group

The Chairs of the Environment Working Group in 2021 were Mr. Jack Palmer White, UN representative, Anglican Communion and Mr. Gopal Patel of Bhumi Global.

The working group was formed initially to engage with UNFCCC Conference of Parties 26 (COP26) planned for November 2020. Due to its postponement because of the COVID-19 pandemic the Environment Working Group continued to prepare for COP 26 which was eventually held in Glasgow, UK in November 2021. The group monitored developments leading up to COP 26 and had several meetings with the UNEP lead Dr. Iyad Abumoghli and the UNFCCC lead Mr. Santosh Thanjavur Prakasam, followed by Megumi Endo. The postponement of the meeting allowed the working group to spend 2021 in preparations for the event and develop activities and plans:

- The group worked with UNEP and UNFCCC to organize a questionnaire that was widely circulated to MFAC and non-MFAC faith actors, seeking information on participation around COP26. The results of the survey were analyzed by staff at UNEP and presented at a pre-COP26 workshop hosted online in May 2022. Building on this workshop, members of MFAC Climate Working Group organized a highly successful Faith and Climate Summit in September 2021, to build momentum towards the main conference.
- Discussions with the UNFCCC regarding the establishment of a formal faith constituency within the UNFCCC. After many years of significant and sustained faith engagement with the UNFCCC, it was felt that it would be important to understand the process and viability of establishing a formal faith constituency. Several discussions took place between the Working Group Co-chairs, UNEP Faith for Earth initiative, and the UNFCCC faith lead. The discussions led to a view that it was not the appropriate time to be pursuing the creation

of a faith constituency, but to prioritize strengthening participation in the Interfaith Liaison Committee and increasing activity with technical processes through other avenues.

The Environment Working Group also worked towards supporting faith engagement with the UN CBD COP15, with the purpose of working collaboratively within the available processes to influence and support a strong outcome for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This work was hindered by the ongoing postponements of the substantive meeting of COP15. However, in support of this area of work, a number of MFAC members and non-MFAC FBOs took an active lead to convene and coordinate a faith response to the GBF and seek opportunities for the faith voice to be present at the negotiations.

2.3. Multilateralism Working group

Following the commemoration of the significant milestone of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the Multilateralism Working Group was established to replace the erstwhile UN-75 Working Group. The Multilateralism Working Group was chaired by Ambassador Alvaro Albacete of KAICIID and Ryan Koch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

The members of the group felt that the UN Secretary-General's call for a strengthened multilateralism would be a good opportunity for MFAC members to engage with UN member states and UN agencies to discuss ways in which multi religious efforts could contribute to effective multilateralism.

The working group met with Ambassador Heusgen of Germany to learn more about the Alliance for Multilateralism which was launched in September 2019 at the initiative of France and Germany.

Some members of the group studied the book *On the Significance of Religion for Global Diplomacy* by Ambassador Philip McDonagh, Kishan Manocha, John Neary and Lucia Vazquez Mendoza. Several plans were made to invite authors of the book for a discussion on issues related to religion and multilateralism.

3. Membership and Co-Chairs

The IATF conducted a staggered process of MFAC renewal for the period 2022-2023. After receiving a number of requests by FBOs and considering their merits carefully, the IATF recommended to include the following organizations in the MFAC: 1) Bahu Trust, 2) Center for Earth Ethics, 3) Lutheran World Federation, and 4) Soka Gakkai International (SGI). A few organizations left the MFAC after the staggered process.

Nominations for new Co-chairs for the period 2022-2023 were requested. Upon receiving the nominations, the IATF reviewed the names, contacted the nominees to confirm and finalized the four Co-chairs based on the criteria that they should '*come from a diverse array of faith traditions and geographical regions and maintain a gender balance in line with the Council's overall goal of diversity and representativity*'.

The IATF decided to appoint the following co-Chairs for a period of two years starting 1 January

2022: Bhumi Global, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, and World YWCA.

In January 2022 a meeting with the outgoing and incoming MFAC took place to ensure a smooth transition.

4. Conclusion and Reflections

4.1. Collaboration

A vital element of the success of MFAC's work is the connectivity with the UN IATF members. 2021 continued to build on the foundations that had been laid in previous years to really engage in a meaningful manner with the whole IATF.

4.2. Monthly meetings with UN IATF Co-chairs

It was a great honour to be the Co-chairs of the MFAC and we valued the advice and guidance we received from the MFAC membership during our two-year tenure. The continuation of the monthly meetings of the MFAC Co-chairs with the UN-IATF Co-chairs was very important during 2021. The lack of in-person meetings meant the monthly meetings were a lifeline which was necessary to build a collegial sense of ownership. The monthly meetings were a safe space where we could have open and frank discussions and come to decisions which were acceptable to both the MFAC and UN IATF. Without mutual respect there is little chance of this working; we felt our words were valued and taken seriously.

4.3. Sharing and dissemination of information

It was wonderful to see how simple and effective it was to share and disseminate information that was provided both by the MFAC members and by the UN IATF members. Sometimes it was information about events, or it was statements or position pieces shared. The beauty of it was this information would then filter through the various networks of the stakeholders of MFAC and UN IATF.

4.4. Working Groups dynamics

We saw a strengthening of the Working Groups which was only possible through the dedication shown by the Co-chairs of each Working Group.

4.5. Room for improvement

There is always room for improvement and two of the main points were

- It is important that the MFAC members get the opportunity to know each other better and what better way than sharing member activities with other members. This in turn can also be shared with the IATF members too.
- As Co-chairs we were acutely aware of the need to develop mechanisms to ensure all members are engaged in both substantive elements of the MFAC as well as in the general direction and strategy of our work.

5. Conclusion

We wish to thank all the MFAC members and UN IATF for giving us a chance to serve you as

Co-chairs. We are delighted to see the appointment of a very capable set of new Co-chairs and we look forward with excitement and anticipation for what the next couple of years hold for this excellent initiative.

Annex VII: IATF FBO Database TORs

THE UNITED NATIONS INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON RELIGION (UN IATF) FBO DATABASE TERMS OF REFERENCE

This is a proposal of a UN Interagency Task Force on Religion (UN IATF) Database Project for engagement with FBOs.

The UN IATF FBO Database will contain faith-based/-inspired civil society partners with whom the UN IATF members have been strongly engaged in the past five years.

The objectives of this UN IATF-R FBO Database are:

- To serve as a centralized repository of the faith-based/-inspired civil society partners for the UN IATF membership, where the information is stored and categorically organized with fitting search functions.
- To help facilitate UN IATF members exploring and expanding the partnerships with faith-based/-inspired organizations in terms of religious communities, geographic areas or thematic work being conducted.
- To help strengthen the linkages with FBO partners with the most up-to-date information and hence facilitate strategic partnerships with multi-religious dynamics in programming efforts.

Proposed way forward:

To establish the proposed database, each UN IATF member will share those FBO partners (30 maximum per UN entity) with whom they have been strongly engaged during the past five years to compile into a single spreadsheet. UN entities will obtain consent from FBO partners to have their information reflected in the database.

The database will contain organizations with their focal points, religious affiliation, geographical area, and thematic areas. The MFAC will be consulted as needed.

Suggested thematic areas include:

1. Gender equality and the empowerment of women
2. Children and youth development
3. Climate change, ecosystems and environmental governance
4. Interreligious and intercultural dialogue
5. Peace, Security, Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid
6. Financial and technical cooperation for sustainable development
7. Strategic communication, media and advocacy
8. Education, science and culture

9. Human settlements and sustainable urban development
10. Illicit drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice
11. Food relief and security
12. Universal healthcare and health emergencies response
13. Decent work for all

During July-August 2021 OSAPG will input information provided by the IATF member entities into the spreadsheet. UN IATF members will provide support to the technical assistance, advice and lessons learned from previous similar projects.

It is noted that in the future each UN IATF-R entity would devote necessary efforts (including human resources, time, and technical support) to maintain and update the UN IATF FBO Database.

Kindly find the following [template](#) for your reference and inputs.