



United Nations Population Fund

Realizing the Faith Dividend:

Religion, Gender, Peace and Security in Agenda 2030



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Realizing the Faith Dividend:

TECHNICAL REPORT



Religion, Gender, Peace and
Security in Agenda 2030



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Introduction from the Editor

According to a Pew Study in 2012, Eight out of ten people in the world profess to a particular faith/religious affiliation. Religious institutions (Churches, temples, mosques, etc.) are the oldest, deepest-rooted, and most widely connected human institutions known to human kind since time immemorial. History, architecture and heritage all attest to the durability, even physical, of these entities.

In a joint USAID and Capacity Plus Study, it is noted that

In many African countries facing severe shortages and poor distribution of health workers, faith based organizations (FBOs) provide between 30%-70% of health care services. Moreover, FBO facilities often serve remote and rural areas where governments have the greatest difficulty in attracting and retaining health workers. Yet FBO health workers frequently remain under recognized for their contributions and uncounted in national statistics. Members of FBO networks also provide a significant amount of preservice education and in service health worker training in African countries. In Malawi and Uganda, for example, FBOs provide 70% of nursing and midwifery training; in Tanzania and Zambia they provide between 30% and 55% of such training. FBO schools have a history of management flexibility and innovation and an excellent track record of training health workers that serve in rural areas.

While there are often disputations about how such data is gathered and questions abound around the veracity and accuracy, there are rarely figures about faith-based social services (or any other public health services in the developing countries especially), which are uncontested. In fact, the disputations rarely offer alternative statistics. In a random survey of a unit in one of the UN development agencies, 25 percent of the staff reported having gone to one religious entity or another either to worship, to study, to access health care, for psycho-social support or counselling or to be married. Some have gone for all of those reasons. The fact is, that hard as it may be to gather data, religious institutions, religious leaders,

¹ "The Key Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Strengthening Human Resources for Health" - http://www.capacityplus.org/sites/intrah.civicaactions.net/files/resources/FBO_overview.pdf. Accessed on March 10, 2015

community-based religious service providers, are permanent features of community life.

In 2012, in an article in *The Economist* entitled “The Catholic Church in

America: Earthly Concerns” estimated that:

...There are now over 6,800 Catholic schools (5% of the national total); 630 hospitals (11%) plus a similar number of smaller health facilities; and 244 colleges and universities. Many of these institutions are known for excellence: seven of the leading 25 part-time law school programmes in America are Catholic (five are run by Jesuits). A quarter of the 100 top-ranked hospitals are Catholic ... annual spending by the church and entities owned by the church was around \$170 billion in 2010.²

From the perspective of the United Nations, given its mandate covering sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights, has a clear understanding of the role of faith-based entities. In an address one year after he took up his post as Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki Moon noted that “faith communities have a crucial role to play in fostering mutual understanding and in promoting consensus on common values and aspirations”³

For the United Nations Population Fund, engaging with faith-based organizations started in the 1970s, with the creation of a Center for Population Studies in the heart of the Sunni Islamic world’s largest and oldest university (and mosque and center of Muslim jurisprudence) – al-Azhar, based in Cairo. When, in 2007, UNFPA became the first development agency in the UN system to map out its own outreach with faith-based organizations, it quickly became clear that most of the UNFPA Country Offices (over 120 of them), actually worked with religious entities of one form or another (religious leaders, religious NGOs, and community based religious groups).

When the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development was established in 2010, UNFPA’s experience in religious

² <http://www.economist.com/node/21560536>

³ UNIS Press Release: <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2008/unisgsm058.html> accessed on March 10, 2016

outreach positioned it to coordinate the activities of the first inter-agency mechanism created in the UN system to simultaneously learn and inform policymaking around the religion-development-humanitarian nexus⁴.

In May 2014, the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) for Sustainable Development, partnered with Norwegian umbrella organization of FBOs, Digni, the University College London and George Mason University, to convene bilateral donor representatives and common FBO partners. The purpose was to begin a hitherto new task of collectively assessing partnerships and emerging links **between religion and international development dynamics, keeping in mind the evolving global priorities for the post 2015 era.** The post 2015 priorities were based on the sustainable development goals' (SDG) agenda, which increasingly emerging through myriad UN and international processes covered a wide spectrum of issues - from governance and institution building to health and nutrition.

The discussions which took place at this consultation (which were carried out under Chatham House Rules)¹, recognized the unique constellation of actors around the table. This was the first time these distinct sectors: donors, the United Nations' agencies and FBOs, were discussing common actions and future global priorities involving religious matters and issues. One of the agreements that emerged among these critical developmental stakeholders, was an agreement to form a loose "Network of Peers on Religion and Development" to meet on a yearly basis, to review geopolitical developments, and to assess what the gathering of minds and institutions, can inspire for Agenda 2030's realization.⁴

In the meantime, the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, and several of the FBOs who participated – not to mention the EU and various academic sectors - have each undertaken various initiatives and consultations, both within their respective organizations and together. The "Financing for Development" meetings were also taking place in the summer of 2015, and while these were not tailored to engage FBOs per se, they did bring together many of the donors, the UN agencies as well as diverse stakeholders from the faith-based world.

⁴ The UN Task Force's full name is the UN Inter-agency Task Force on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations for Sustainable Development and Humanitarian work. It was established as a UN Development Group inter-agency mechanism in 2010, and currently brings together over 15 different UN bodies from across the system.

These varied consultations, are enabling multiple opportunities and fora through which reflections, collation and assessment of outreach, partnerships and policy recommendations are being made. One particular example is the World Bank meeting that took place on July 8 and 9 in which key developmental stakeholders were invited to address the nexus between religion and poverty eradication, with a view to focusing, substantively speaking, largely on health-related dynamics, and to a lesser extent on some aspects of climate change, gender-based violence (GBV) and the Syrian refugee situation.

Given the range of invitees to the Washington DC conference ““Religion & Sustainable Development: Building Partnerships to End Extreme Poverty””⁵ hosted by World Bank, cohosted by German government and organized by the Join Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, an excellent opportunity was therefore provided for the sequel to the Donor-UN-FBO peers’ meeting (DUF II) which was slated for New York, to take place immediately after. Specifically, DUF II, addressed three other critical SDG areas, which have received relatively less reflection and policy focus among and within this particular tri-lateral modality. These issues are: governance and democratization; gender equality and women’s empowerment; and conflict, peace and security.

The purpose of the second Donor–United Nations – FBO policy roundtable was to understand how each of these ‘sectors’ perceives the links, challenges and opportunities around religion and the 3 focus areas: gender, governance, peace and security; to assess how issues of religion intersect with these three critical SDG areas more generally, while also determining which tools may be available for information sharing and knowledge building around the above areas and seeking to identify possible areas of potential partnership – concrete outcomes - which can be rolled-out in the following years.

Four Key questions framed the analysis presented by the different stakeholders. These were:

1. What are the key challenges facing your organization as regards the nexus between religion and {governance, peace and security, gender

⁵ <http://jliflc.com/conferences/religion-sustainable-development-building-partnerships-to-end-extreme-poverty/>

equality & women's empowerment}? These can be attitudes, laws, policies, organizational culture - or lack thereof..

2. How are these challenges being coped with – what tools/ means do you have at your disposal already and what is your assessment of the use of these?
3. What do you need from the respective partners around this table to facilitate, inform, enable your response(s) to some of these challenges?
4. What should we be conscious of avoiding/mitigating against as we manage these multiple nexus areas, within our respective organizations, and together?

The following pages showcases the discussions which were informed, framed and in some cases, subsumed these questions. Different voices from religious and secular communities enrich the conversations and the analysis herein presented. While this cannot the diversity and the richness, the analysis presented seeks to remain true to the spirit of constructive and frank presentations and reflections.

Voices of Faith

Three speakers framed the deliberations from the varied perspectives and their voices are critical to understand the how and why of religion in contemporary development and foreign policy. Rabbi David Saperstein, the United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Dr. Mohamed Ashmawey, the (then) Chief Executive Officer of Islamic Relief Worldwide, and Rabbi and professor Burton Visotzky, Professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

David Saperstein, as a religious leader in his own right, speaks for issues of religious freedom from a governmental perspective. The experience of his office is based on the role of the international 'Ambassador' to one of the world's largest governments, around what are effectively some of the most contested areas in the nexus between religion and foreign policy.

Mohammed Ashmawey sits at the non-governmental end of the spectrum, where governmental decisions often can either enable or disable the work of religious organizations. Given developments around the Middle East and echoing in Europe and elsewhere, Ashmawey's perspectives and insights spoke to what it was like to a Muslim development and relief organization itself caught in between foreign policy decisions, and peoples' basic needs.

Burton Visotzky conveys yet another world-view, one steeped in academia as an educator, but colored by civic activism in the national social justice field, informed by decades of active participation and engagement also at the community level.

In spite of their various backgrounds and ‘offices’, their voices highlight the precedence, urgency and value of engaging with religious issues and religious actors in contemporary times. Below are excerpts.

Rabbi David Saperstein - U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom

The Perspective of a Governmental Envoy to the Religious World

Government laws affect religious institutions. Social hostility and violence oppress endangered communities and how governments respond. We need to create an environment in which SDGs can flourish. We need to address the role of religion in religious communities.

Religious groups cannot achieve what they want in a controlling governmental system and will often lead them to follow extreme groups because of lack of other options. The local and global have come closer and closer. If we wish to see the weakening of extremist groups, then we must work with religious groups to delegitimize extremist groups. However, there is a paradox with strengthening religious groups because they are then delegitimized by extremist groups for being “unauthentic.”

The predominant Christian male population needs to be worked with to alter their views within their religious context and use them to provide their education to their followers. When governments act to impose on acts of religious groups (lack of religious freedom) it creates a large clause that affect our humanitarian work.

Some religious groups are divided and cut off from social services. Many areas where local religious groups are uncorrupt and loyal, those groups help the people in these small communities and we should work with them. However, they are often unequipped to work with larger organizations and this is a great opportunity to work on to develop. In some settings on the global level, we see that the more religious freedom the less religious violence and less corruption.

**Dr. Mohammed Ashmawey – Chief Executive Officer,
Islamic Relief Worldwide**

The Perspective of an Islamic Development Organization

The world is becoming more difficult to live in. So why do we need religion?

FBOs were there before secular organizations, serving people of mankind before it was the government's job to do so. Collaboration can provide an effective means to achieving SDGs. Why hasn't poverty, lack of education, hunger, etc. been taken care of? Because we did not collaborate with and include FBOs.

The people we work with/for believe in their faith more, so if we do not speak their language they will have their doubts. Respecting religious beliefs because if only numbers matter, then why do we see suicides in developed countries. Employees of FBOs are also willing to go the extra mile because they are following their spiritual beliefs. It is also easier for people to trust their religious leaders. Religious organizations also lack experience because they are doing it for the sake of their gods and oftentimes have the attitude of "if it is for god how can I fail?" we do not need to be shy from FBOs because they do not have what it takes because they have value in our fight. We should work with them to fix the things they are lacking.

Our bibles do not say help your Muslim/Jewish/Christian brother, they all say "help your neighbor." This does not specify what the religion of that neighbor is. Donor and multilateral organizations hesitate to work with FBOs and not just governments.

On the subject of Gender Equality, why wait until someone dies or suffers to help. We should develop and work before emergencies. This leads to the topic "advocacy." We choose to advocate for GBV, GF, FGM, and early/forced marriage. When you go somewhere to advocate for or benefit FGM, you do not go to attack religion, governments, people, and go save the women being affected.

"Let's create true partnerships to do this work together."

**Rabbi Burton Visotzky, Professor, Jewish Theological
Seminary**

I speak from a unique perspective: I am a professor and rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), which is not a development organization, but rather an academic/professional training institution. Further, it is a distinct and tiny minority: Jewish, centrist, JTS ordain rabbis and trains PhD's to teach Jewish studies.

Deuteronomy 15:11: For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command you, saying, You shall open your hand wide unto your kin, to your poor, and to your needy.

This is all lovely and a fitting prologue to speaking about the challenges for first the Millennial Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) within the Jewish community, large and small, locally, nationally, and internationally.

The question is bandwidth: what occupies the screens, the agenda, the attention of American Jewish community organizations, leadership and grassroots? SDG's are not on the screen, nor on the agendas of the leadership. They are completely unknown to the grassroots Jewish community.

The Joint and the AJWS are the two leading organizations that do this internationally. We are very proud of them and the outsized role they play compared to the proportion of the Jewish population in the world. BUT, they have to fight hard for every dollar they raise. They are very, very important, but have struggled with smaller budgets and layoffs each year since the onset of the Bush recession in 2008.

Another challenge: Judaism is not like the UN – we have no organizational structure or clear lines of authority. Nor is Judaism hierarchic like the Catholic Church. Rather we are anarchic to the point of seeming every person for his or herself. That means that each organization, old and new, fights for a slice of the communal pie. It also means we have no overarching sense of governance. There is no real central voice (despite certain recent claims by politicians to speak for the Jewish people).

Jewish newspapers are local, communal, and largely NOT interested in international issues: with one notable exception: ISRAEL. Israel and its policies take up enormous amounts of bandwidth – to the exclusion of SDG's to be sure – but often to the exclusion of much else as well. International awareness in the Jewish community is transfixed by Israel, and on an expansive day by Iran, Islamists, or anything that looks like a threat. Peace and Security means peace and security for Jewish communities in Israel and Europe. In fairness, there is still enormous sensitivity to the painfully learned experience of the Holocaust.

One positive note concerns women and gender issues. Here Jewish institutions have been working towards women's equality and equality in leadership for four decades. Progress has been and continues to be significant. Education remains a priority in the Jewish community – even as the American Jewish populace is ill educated about Jewish traditions, holidays, customs, and texts. Congregational life is dwindling. Rabbis in pulpits are desperately searching for modes of bringing new blood into the membership –

putting more Jews in the pews. Live music, small groups, Sabbath meals are high priorities. Israel and Holocaust discourse still dominate, despite three and a half millennia of other rich Jewish culture. Discussion of SDG's is not anywhere in sight. But the SDG's might be themselves a source of revitalization in the American Jewish community.

I end this report with a further ray of hope: the values of the Millennium Development Goals and the now forming Sustainable Development Goals are largely congruent with the values of American Judaism. American Jews will get involved in the promotion of SDG's, even find leadership positions –from their platform as progressive Americans, and to some extent as Jews. If the Jewish community is to encourage leadership in the promotion of the SDG's, it will be through a steady drum-beat of reminding American Jews that the vast majority of the values the SDG's promote are Jewish values, too. This is good both for commitment to the Jewish community and to the world community through the SDGs.

Notes:

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The sustainable development goals – does religion matter?

“Development is about values.

We cannot meet the SDG agenda on our own. FBOs play a role”

The discussion around the question of whether religion mattered in regards to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) allowed participating members – bilateral donors, Faith-based organizations, and UN entities - to reflect on their own evolving relationship with religion. Compared to just two years ago, there is a definite shift in attitudes towards engagement with religion, as attested to by the statements made by several of the donors. FBOs spoke to their legacy of working in the social, political and cultural issues “long before others started”. Several UN agencies referenced an ongoing challenge by complications inherent in engaging with FBOs, including a dominant organizational culture which still tends to adopt a narrative of religion as being a force of evil and backwardness. This, some noted, is apparently on the increase, given the developments around ISIS and unfolding events with religious and ethnic minorities in the Middle East. Nevertheless, there was an emerging consensus around (I) the relevance of the SDGs and (II) that a common language – bridging the development rhetoric and the ‘religious speak’ – may well be timely.

-(Action 2015.org 2015)



Notes:



Viewpoints

From Bilateral Donors

“For Germany, this question of whether religion matters is not just an academic debate. By the end of this year, Germany will develop a strategy on religion and development. The new German Minister has made religion and development his priority - that is of integrating the potential of religion into existing development work. This is evident in the efforts taken by the German Government, including the co-hosting of the World Bank’s Religion and Sustainable Development Conference in Washington D.C.”⁶

Reflecting on their respective experience, BMZ and GIZ representatives called for “a focus on policymaking, not just on implementation”, stressing that “we have to change our ways of cooperation and programming. We need to go beyond why religion matters, by going a step further, we have to listen - not just tell FBOs that they have to change, maybe we have to change not just on technical and esthetical aspects.”

A Norwegian faith-based NGO representative reflected on his country’s engagement with faith-related issues, noting, “Norway is quite a secular country so it does not understand how many people around the world are basing their decisions on religion. The country needs to “better understand the relationship between development and religion”, at the same time, it was pointed out, that FBOs were the ones who started developmental interventions through the missionaries in the 1940s. Thus, before the public sector elaborated its existing mechanisms to manage national and global development work. Moreover, the FBO role and work is “more important today than it was decades ago... NORAD understands this as the agency director commissioned a report on the relationship between religion and development in 2012”.

From Multilateral (UN, World Bank, EU and OECD) Actors

“We tend to work with whom we know, our usual partners... there is a lot of distrust, we don’t have a culture that has embraced working

⁶ Link: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/07/12/global-conference-religion-sustainable-development>

with religious groups, and we work mostly with governments. We don't know who is who in these religious spaces [and] we run the risk of empowering the wrong people"

There is a shared sense of understanding of the potential that the SDGs have in comparison to earlier development goals. The MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) rallied the world around extreme poverty. They were by no means perfect; they came as a response to the trend of unnecessary inequality. They reflected the motherhood or apple pie of development - things people could not agree with. They did not capture the whole concept of human rights or respect for nature.

The SDGs are different from their predecessors so to speak. For the first time, these global development goals refer not only to the 'poorer' countries, but they are universal in their relevance and implication. Whereas poverty was the defining feature of the previous 8 MDGs, inequalities, social inclusion, and human rights are threads running through the 17 SDGs. The agenda is therefore much broader, complex, integrated, and includes links between the person, the land, the water, the air and the social, political and economic infrastructure of life. All of which adds an additional layer of complexity.⁷ The SDGs – and the processes of elaborating them – attempt to go beyond the binarism of aid providers and aid recipient – acknowledging that deep inequalities featured as pockets of immense wealth in poor countries are mirrored by areas of significant poverty in so-called 'richer' countries. It follows that there is no one set of actors, and no one sector – governmental or non-governmental – which can tackle the challenges on their own. This is why, it was argued, partnerships are critical.

A speaker from UNDP reflected on the organization's experience with the SDG agenda. The UN's "bandwidth", he noted, has been good when it comes to generating ownership of the global development agenda. Now that the SDGs are about to be agreed, however, there is an urgency to ensuring that communities and groups hitherto not involved, begin to own and run with the goals. In reflecting on UNDP's own outreach to faith-based actors, it

⁷ The UN- ECOSOC Breakfast meeting, "Culture: The Key to a Successful Transition towards the Sustainable Development Goals" which was held on July 10, 2015 at the UN Headquarters in New York is representative of the kind of mobilization there is around the SDGs.

⁸ See the current stakeholder mapping of GIZ German development cooperation in the Annex.

was noted that there remains, by and large, “a reluctance in regards to working with FBOs”. This is informed in part, by an aversion to risk on one hand, but on the other hand, there is a concern that an international and intergovernmental entity should be seen to be “getting involved with something that is holding people back”. There is, therefore, a need for more encouragement about the value of such partnerships.

These perspectives engendered lively debate around the need to ensure that faith-based organizations, in their diversity, “are not only recognized, but also engaged on a level playing field”. Faith-based developmental organizations in particular, have already been engaged in delivering basic developmental social services, as well as humanitarian relief, since “long before bilaterals and multilaterals existed”. We have proven our worth many times over, noted one Christian FBO representative, “and we are the very communities which the international development paradigms speak to the need to engage”.

UNICEF acknowledged the broad recognition in the agency that the organization needs to work “more extensively” with religious actors. “The challenge is how ... we are still trying to figure out how”, they noted. Agreeing with the above intervention, UNICEF noted that to reach communities, FBOs are a “critical conduit”.

Many bilaterals (such as the German Cooperation for International Development/GIZ, USAID, Norad and DfID) attest to engagement with diverse religious actors over time therefore. Similarly, UN agencies have been partnering in a variety of ways with FBOs, and some have undertaken efforts to track, or ‘map’, this work – e.g. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP and ILO to name but a few . Nevertheless, this work has been criticized as “lacking in strategic reflection and ...given to ad hoc engagement”. Another challenge, it was argued, is that in some cases “certain religious groups promote values counter to human rights”, while in others, “people [can] claim they are religious leaders when there is a serious question mark as to their impact”. There is therefore, “a lot that still needs to be figured out”.

A representative from the European Union (EU) noted that “FBOs are considered part of the designation of civil society” for the European multilateral mechanism. The EU’s development policy is based on two platforms: democracy and human rights. EU policies, he noted, are therefore rights’ based, and a central feature of the intersections with religion is around the area of freedom of religion and belief. Another important intersection,

he noted is around the nexus of religion as part of the considerations around peace and security. The EU commission engages with FBOs through co-financing (i.e. social services delivery projects), “as long as they engage with rights’ based institutions”.

From Faith-Based Organizations

“The SDGs are a good start”, admitted a representative from Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW). The organization, which has prioritized working with the Post-2015 Dialogue, identified three main issues of focus: gender, finance, and environment. IRW is looking at the engagement with these issues also through the prism of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s own positions, and seeking to support a **Muslim platform for sustainable development**. It is important for FBOs to present frameworks on development and look at how these frameworks change and engage with faith-based leaders.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was among the FBOs which reflected on their long legacy of work on the issues addressed in the SDG agenda by noting that it has “not been easy” for the organization to feel itself involved in the global conversation, because for too long it “has been a force out in wilderness”. The organization has vast experience bringing together faith, and development concerns around issues of justice, peace, and intelligence. They have always brought peoples’ concerns to the international policy-making tables. Given the people-centred mandate of the WCC, their representatives stressed that each of the seventeen development goals fall within the organization’s mandate. They advocated for the fact that no development work is complete if it does not take into account a clear understanding of the capacities which the Churches represent in service delivery to billions of people, and the capacities of the institutions and the faith communities affiliated to them, to engender social, political and cultural transformation.

Based on their global and rich experience, all faith representatives agreed that the biggest challenge in their area of work has been around gender justice, economic justice, and ecological justice. In thinking about partnerships around the SDGs between donors (bilateral and multilateral) and the FBOs, they were unanimous in calling for the following considerations:

- Investing in achieving clarity on the values that inform faith-based and secular partnerships.

- Acknowledging that gender justice remains a challenging set of issues, because of the difficult readings of text and the complexities of cultural practices. Given this reality, rather than walk away from the challenge, there needs to be concerted efforts to work towards the specific areas where there is a confluence of objectives – issue-based strategic alliances – as well as developing methods of “respectful disengagement” which does not harm the objectives of the SDG
- Ensuring that youth are integrating not merely as an issue set, but in a deliberate effort to engage some of the most organized and deepest reaching youth networks known to humankind – religious youth. Investing in bringing religious youth networks into the secular policy tables alongside the secular youth networks has to be deliberately undertaken as both a means, as well as an end to partnerships between the faith-based NGOs/FBOs, the UN and the Donors.

Notes:

4

Critical concerns

Common Goals but Differing Languages

The development space needs to welcome and integrate differing voices. This is critical as governments and agencies seek to increase their engagement with faith based actors and organizations. It is important to hear the religious actors and groups speak about development from their own perspective. Most religious leaders want plurality, they do not want one structure or mode to be imposed on them.

There is an emerging recognition that while welcoming difference into the room, there needs to be, simultaneously, an appreciation of what is common to these diverse stakeholders, which, in turn, enables collective engagement around shared purpose. Such common causes can include dignity and human rights. For too long, issues of human rights have been seen as secular whereas religion tends to be perceived by secular development actors, largely, as a divider. In reality, the lines are far less clear cut. Insisting on the division between the two is unhelpful and may even create unnecessary barriers to effective collaboration and understanding. It is difficult to pit traditional values and human rights against each other. People of faith were a part of the drafting of human rights. It is important to see human right and faith together. Human rights become a religion for some people. There is a shared sentiment among the diverse actors – whether from the UN, the donors or the FBO side, that human rights cannot be eroded or overruled in the name of religion. Moreover, as several faith actors noted, “people are motivated by faith, but not [necessarily] by religious leaders”.

In this regard, the need to ensure children were able to receive a “global education such that they may understand that we are all different...that we all have value in this world, and they must treat others with care” remains an area of need articulated by the faith actors. In most religions, it is argued, “one is called to help others without knowing their religion:. People are driven by religion for good and justice.

Those involved in development work therefore, need to learn three languages: the language of human rights, the language of faith, and the local languages

[If] indeed ‘God is back’, then how do we work in and with these religious spaces and actors? Yet, development needs to work with diversities ... So we have to allow difference into the room, instead of saying ‘yes you can come to the policy table - but only on our terms’!

spoken. Most of the basis for the human rights language will be found in faith. Learning the different languages allows one to realize that there are few things on which we disagree.

Ongoing Challenges

Trust

“Ad-hoc outreach does not build trust”

There is a lack of trust between FBOs and secular development actors, such as donors and multilateral organizations, which needs to be overcome. There will always be people who abuse religion. There have been two ways of dealing with religion. The first response assumes that anyone who accepts religion is good so give everyone the money. The second response is “well, they’re religious - so I’m suspicious.”

The reality is however, that it is often something in between these perspectives and this necessitates a better, deeper, and more grounded understanding of religion – as a culture and way of life, but also as a player in political and economic spaces. This understanding was referred to as “doing our homework [as secular development actors]. But the work does not stop at the understanding and learning that needs to be done – i.e. the religious literacy. In fact, there is also a cultural shift within the institutions that needs to take place. Only in those cases can a process of reaching out to faith communities be “fairly done”. The biggest challenge, some argued, can be from within these secular institutions themselves who need to become literate, but also to work on one another. There remains a huge dissonance therefore, between perspectives on whether, or not, to “work with religion”. This dissonance resonates in the manner of the outreach to religious representatives and communities, and is reflected in the ad-hoc nature of the relationships. Ad hoc does not build trust.

The very manner of identification of religious interlocutors can be part of the challenge of trust building. “When a UN or EU or WB-based political officer wants to engage with religion - they will not necessarily go through the internal systems or networks, they will usually go through the governments, e.g. ask the government to nominate a religious leaders”. This, it was argued, prevents the organizational capacity to build on its established relationships, and may result in a politically-sound religious actor, i.e. one who can tow the governmental line, but not necessarily one

There is a concern among some FBOs, about being engaged in “UN-led attempts to ... liberalize certain conservative religious positions”. There is an equal concern among some of the more secular civil society organizations on the other hand, that the FBO partnerships with the UN and the EU could at best turn a blind eye, or at worst, endorse, conservative agendas they have fought hard to reverse through human rights education and laws.

who is trusted by their communities or understands the practical processes of delivering key social needs to them. Moreover, skepticism and lack of trust of the secular international organizations is a real concern when and if a religious counterpart is 'nominated' by their government for one event, but they may be different from the ones the developmental offices were working with over many years, and in fact, may even be advocating against certain human rights.

Mechanisms of Partnerships

A Christian FBO recalled its experience of working with government support and noted that there were no problems in applying general government standards. "The developmental work of churches is increasingly replicating the work of any other NGO in development".

One perspective is that in practical terms, the distinction between FBOs and other non-faith based non-governmental developmental and humanitarian organizations, is "not so much". Rather, it was characterized as "a messy space [given] the linkages between the religious and the political and the violent and the radical and the right wing". This renders it even more critical to "name and distinguish between the different actors". There is a need to be more precise in "defining where the actors are now and what are they talking about".

Another point of view however, maintained that "a faith-based movement is not the same as any NGO-led movement". In fact, here it was argued that there is a need to clarify the distinction between FBOs and other civil society organizations (CSOs). In distinguishing between the diverse forms of NGOs, it was argued, there is room to also appreciate the specific value-added of each kind of entity and its deliverables in international development. Faith-based actors are so diverse in their own right – with religious leaders playing a markedly different role in behavior change, than a faith-based development NGO. With this view (of distinction) in mind, a call was made to ensure that both bilateral and multilateral organizations in particular, have a clear set of guidelines for engaging with the diverse range of religious actors.

Accountability

SDG indicators will be critical. Governments are taking a key role in identifying the indicators. The process of defining indicators is similar to

what it was like with the MDGs but it will be open to civil society. There has been work on organizing groups to ensure the inclusion of good governance, gender equality, etc. into the SDG draft. There is a good language on human rights but accountability is missing; hence, indicators will be critical.



Interlinkages

Religion and Governance

“Religion does matter - in both domestic and international policy”

The discussion on “Religion and Governance” focused on the efforts taken by government and multilateral donors to consider religious perspectives about governance within their SDG frameworks. The SDGs have a governance aspect to themselves. The emphasis of SDGs in political awareness - of governance and security – is new and different from other development frameworks. This is evident in, for example in SDG Goal 16, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. The quality of the government is a large part of development. When thinking about religion and governance, the traditional construct of liberal vs. religious governments has to be challenged. The way in which the SDGs are framed helps to get past the structural construction of the liberal vs. religious government construct. Issues of religion and government are not exclusive to non-Western countries as these issues affect Americans too.

A representative from USAID noted that their efforts to host different consultations while making sure to account for different actors by being inclusive as possible. The government is very supportive of the agenda and would like a more technical reading of the agenda and input from economic and social factions. The government is very supportive of SDG Goal 16 – of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies – and would like to see consultations with those outside of Abrahamic faiths (i.e. the Baha’i Society). Different and dissonant actors need to be brought into the process. The process and discussions should be as inclusive as possible; everyone should talk to each other on the table. Both the U.S. Government and President are completely supportive of the SDGs but they need more information. The president has been receiving input from the FBOs to learn how to work with them and for their needs. Climate change has been a shared concern of the U.S. Government and FBOs, as the U.S. Government is going to push strongly towards issues related to climate change. The Government believes that the concern of migration is not properly attended to in the document. SDG Goal 5 – to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - might be too long and not focused enough, but it is very important in achieving the SDGs and agenda.

The representative from the United Kingdom's Wilton Park reflected on the substance of existing conversations on religion and development. When the 'whos' and 'hows' of development matters are considered, the conversations always linger around the 'how'. The FBOs are part of the conversation of who but they need to be a part of the conversation of How. There have been two kinds of institutional responses to religion. One is the U.S. approach towards religion. The second is the French approach towards religion, which is the golden strat-part approach that religion can be a part of everything or nothing. Institutional capacity exists both on the government and FBO side. The fact that the SDGs are taken openly and freely is very importantly as it translates to the symbolic, representation, and policy level.

FBOs need to recognize and realize that they are legitimate. Policy and political actors should work towards making a difference. As of now, development actors have either looked for the rational evidence to make evidence based policy (the Berlin paradigm) or looked for the revelations (the Athens side). It is important for everyone to be multi-lingual. There is a need to make a new break in policy grounds through action, such as the actions plans taken by Jesuits and Sikhs regarding Global Warming.

The discussion then turned to accountability issues when a speaker from the UN acknowledged that there has been some resistance to SDG Goal 16, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Governance is one of the most elusive concepts – with one of the most challenging issues being corruption. There was some discussion that religious institutions need to be rallied to join the global anti-corruption efforts more visibly. Discussion of compassion gets meshed into discussions of justice. It is important to remember that every organization or movement deals with corruption - they have to face the issue of how they function as an institution. Faith-based or faith-inspired groups do things that others cannot do. There is focus on the issue of grappling with religion and abuse but it is important to realize that the same abuse can be elsewhere too. Structures are built to be used in politics and government. These are structures for good but there will always be people that will abuse, so human rights are not separate from abuse. The UN should look for partners, people waiting in the wings.

From the perspective of governmental donors the indicators for progress need to be as technical as possible. There is a risk of generating indicators

“When we’re in the room, we need to ask ‘who’s not in the room?’

The policy makers sitting in Paris are not the same in Cape Town.

We need to pay attention to creating inclusive institutions and opportunities”

that make it hard to assess progress. Religious actors need to hold themselves accountable. The participating Ecumenical Christian organization shared its perspective on this by sharing how the organization was working on financial management and financial accountability. There was recommendation to organize an Evangelical association around financial-accountability that creates mechanism to assure financial accountability in religious groups. SDG Goal 16, which calls for the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, is not limited to the governance of countries. This can also be applied to other organizations for accountability and transparency purposes – including FBOs. Donor and partners ask FBOs for institutional capacity and transfer of responsibility.

Religion, Conflict, Peace, and Security

The discussion on “Religion, Conflict, Peace and Security” focused both on the challenges that exist in engaging with religion in a conflict and security context and the great potential this engagement has in leading towards more peace. The session began with the moderator providing an overview of some of the challenges. In a conflict area, the identity of the FBO becomes critical for entry. Conflicts challenge concepts of inclusivity.



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The notion of “I don’t play with others because they do not ascribe to my denomination” poses a real problem. The question of whether one is willing to work with other denominations becomes critical and decisive. Conflicts also challenge the identification of partners. For example, one cannot tell who’s who in Syria and Iraq today. Thus, the same set of religious leaders and organization get invited to conferences every time (i.e. from the “Top-100 List” of organization from each faith). Many of these organizations attend the conferences to make public statements regarding inclusion and exclusion. There is also a prominent notion of fear - Why is the world interested in religion right now? With the fear of radical militant groups coming into Europe and the U.S., suddenly everyone wants to engage with religion, not out of respect and open transparency to include them on equal terms but because people are just afraid. People engage with religion today because they have to.

Education

A strong affirmation by the faith-based participants was made as to the following:

The common language of justice is provided by the humanities, which are under threat with significance placed on the sciences. There is a need to be comfortable about having conversations about the meaning of life. We need to issue a call to those influencing the agenda of higher education, that there is still relevance to the questions of humanity.

Other challenges that religious communities have in this realm relate to the issues with education, especially in the religious training of children. Often, the divisions among and within religious groups can be traced to what is being taught in schools and textbooks by religious leaders. This also enables extremist to hijack the faith communities’ interests and issues. The causes of extremism include alienation of various kinds, including economic, social, and religious. One kind of extremism occurs where the state is trying to co-opt religion by boiling a kettle of pressure in the region. Another form of extremism occurs where there is a simplistic, alienated poorly informed sense of religion. In this case, the narrow theological training does not include any kind of critical thinking and thus religious leaders in training are indoctrinated. Support for theological education that includes a broad range of disciplines and thinking can be provided by encouraging governments to engage with FBOs and religious training. Hence, It is important for faith communities to become sensitive to the issues of power, injustice, and more. What the UN can do to help faith

“It is important for all partners to realize it is OK to be appreciative of the significance of theology, for the FBO’s to reclaim public discourse, and for the UN and donors to continue to engage FBO’s in their conversations”

communities struggling with these issues is to continue to convene and urge religious organizations to engage in interfaith dialogue.

Mechanisms of Partnerships and Collaboration

“Religious movements have tremendous power in some parts of the world. One of the real challenges we have is of fear. Creating interfaith relationship is one of the most important things we can do”

Participants acknowledged that there is a need for different modes of collaboration. There is additional room to the existing one in which we do our homework. It is important for donor organizations to acknowledge FBOs both at the higher level and at the lower or grassroots level. More outreach is needed toward the lower-level FBOs who have a lot of potential. The grassroots level allows for more opportunity to dialogue on tough and sensitive issues. It is important to keep asking the question - *Who is not in the room?* The role of donors and UN is to build a stronger initiative.

In conflict zones, it is important to identify the religious affiliation of religious actors. The identification gives them certain credibility. Development actors should be very careful about the language and words they use with other religious actors. An Evangelical Christian development organization reaffirmed the need to practice bilingualism. Both theological and philosophical languages need to be spoken. Faith communities need to learn the language of policy and learn how to practice inclusion. Those seeking to work with religious communities should not let those who are fomenting violence to take the theological ground. Space needs to be created for intra-faith conversations. There is no space for conversations about economic models. When the pope talked about the “dung of the devil,” he was referring to the policies that are generating mass poverty. There needs to be a move away from policies that generate poverty and mass violence. There is an agreement to end poverty but no conversation about how and what models will be effective. The Pope and President of the World Bank have had a conversation on ending extreme poverty but there is a difference of understanding of what that looks like. There is little representation of interfaith dialogue in conversations about ending poverty.

“Network building is healthy but we need these meeting to lead to actual interventions”

Shifting the Narrative

A participant from the World Council of Churches clarified that *the narrative that religious groups are solely responsible for conflicts needs to be challenged*. The

focus is often on how much the FBOs are not accountable in this area. Political extremists are responsible for conflicts but so are governments. The governments are responsible for conflicts, exclusion and violence. Governments are still supporting the arms trade. More consideration should be given to the questions: *Are religious organizations responsible for the economic policies and economic conditions which are underlying many of these conflicts? What about political rights for the freedom to vote and elect your government? How will we keep the government accountable? How will we hold the UN accountable?* Fingers are often pointed at religious communities though. Interfaith dialogue is important but there should be focus on cooperation. These dialogues need to move beyond talk to action. Collaboration with different religious groups can prevent incitement to violence and ensure Civil Society involvement in ensuring that governments use funds for development not for militaristic purposes. SDG Goal 16 is difficult but will be decisive in this realm.

Peacemaking

An African Catholic rights organization provided an overview of challenges with peace building efforts in Kenya, where the major roadblock has been trust. Where there is a government that mistrusts, then whichever way one enters, one realizes that they ultimately have to gain the trust of the government. With the lack of trust mechanisms, there is also a lack of support. In Africa, there is lack of support - many people are reluctant to work for issues of justice. Trust and support mechanisms need to be put in place. This lack of trust also exists in the communities where there is disunity. The conflicts taking place are cultural, ethnic or religious, so it is difficult to build trust. Within the same faith community, there are political and ethnic divisions. A community's values of justice and peace are at risk when activists are challenged due to their religion, ethnicity, and culture.

A representative from the UNFPA branch in Kenya explained how these challenges manifested in Kenya, observing that there is a shocking level of violence in a world today that is highly educated and cultured. North Eastern Kenya is particularly fragile. The UNFPA undertook a consultation with 15 high-burden countries where conflict has led to extreme struggle for girls. There is a need to examine the triggers and the pacifiers of conflicts. Both triggers and pacifiers need to be examined, not just the triggers. The FBOs and religious leaders have huge potential in this context. It is the influence of faith that can help tune down the rhetoric of radicalization. Relationships with faith communities have not been leveraged. One crucial

aspect of this is to harmonize the knowledge and narratives of the mosque and church with the principles of peace, security and development. If these issues can be addressed in North Eastern part of Kenya, it will be possible to stabilize the nation.

A representative from an Evangelical Christian development organization shared its experience in responding to the Ebola crisis. The Ebola grant making process fragmented the faith community. At a UN meeting on Ebola, the concept of “collapsed systems” came up, as all of the ministers talked about some of countries affected are fragile states. It is important to note that these countries are just recovering from war. The youth there are coming out from war alienated, traumatized, and unemployed. Boko Haram Scouts are on the look out for new recruits. Rebuilding state systems is critical. States have been unable to deliver on the trust of the citizen to the state.

“Religious tolerance is a good thing; it should not be taken for granted”

Another Christian organisation identified four key pieces of the peace-making from the FBO perspective:

- (1) The process or way of working is really important - theology and social science can be brought together. There are solid methodologies to do this.
- (2) Presence is really important – short funding cycle hinders the longevity of the FBOs.
- (3) Institutions also have a key role – there was a phase when institutions where unpopular with organization but people need education and health care. It is all about people, people are important.
- (4) Tracking progress is important – measurement should be conducted not to please the donor but keep the self-integrity of the FBO.

Religion, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

Women’s Empowerment is the single most important issue in modern development. Feminism and feminist language have been associated with controversial connotations. There is a “Bermuda Triangle” around the narratives of religious women, meaning that their narratives are often not acknowledged or understood. Most people are familiar with only one type of religious, female figure –the nun.

It is not just the narratives of religious women which are missing. Women in general are absent in different spheres of development. Women’s roles in the continuum of conflict, peace, and security are important and need to be

incorporated into the framework and narrative of religion in development. During conflicts, women's roles change, yet their new perspectives and experiences are given no consideration in talks and decision-making. After conflicts cease, most women are expected to go "back to the kitchen" and resume their old roles. Many gender equality goals are lagging behind, such as those on maternal health. With this overview of some of the big challenges with gender equality and women's empowerment, speakers from different organizations provided their own perspectives on the subject.

It was argued that the current framework of gender equality, actually takes an exclusive approach towards decision-making – i.e. one that excludes other cultures and traditions. While it is often disputed, some religious leaders would themselves maintain that there is a link between traditional cultures and faith. It was decried that often, the churches preach one thing and practice another. Those who could speak to the experiences of entities such as the World Council of Churches also admitted that there is progress in

“How do religious stories and proverbs transform into the ways women are socialized – and how can secular international actors work with these new forms of more gender-sensitive and egalitarian religious narratives?”

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“We women are aware. We know our rights. What about our men?”

terms of women’s participation, albeit not in terms of their representation in government and leadership. Looking at economic empowerment-related issues, it was argued, may add value. A woman who has no economic empowerment is often unable to participate in political leadership. But improving education is equally, if not more instrumental, since it rare to have women in leadership positions who are uneducated. In some places, such as in Kenya, the teaching of the children is left to the women, many of whom will say that “the men do not really sit with the children”. Therefore, these women are not only influencing the children intellectually but also economically by encouraging their boys to go to work and seek economic opportunities.

Institutional Narratives on Gender Equality

Gender equality is being contested in a diversity of spaces, including within and among UN Member States. The contestation will often be shrouded in religious terms, and is often articulated by entities or regimes known to have laws in place, but gender insensitive abilities. Some who are seen as the voices of religion and faith which influence some Member State positions, may well be perceived by other as “have no right to speak on the behalf of religion”. The definition of family rights has been given to people that do not allow the participation of women. The word family has become a curse word in the UN. A participant suggested for a media-based campaign from a religious or a faith basis that could address how twisted the concept of have family has become to stop further damage.

The subject of gender equality at the UN been fragmented. Recently, the UN asked the Baha’i International Community to pull others together and work towards the advancement of gender equality. There is discomfort on women’s part to bring men into the conversations about gender equality. This is because when men do come to the table, they take over in regards to agenda, funding, programming, and more. The feminists’ acknowledgment of the importance of men’s presence in gender equality discussion is missing.

A representative from the Norwegian Digni also addressed this issue from the organization’s perspective. Although there has there has been substantial progress within the organization as the participation of women in the decision-making process has increased, the discussions around women’s rights issues remain guarded. Women rights issues have been limited to discussion for and by women only as men are not often

welcome to the discussion table. The Digni speaker suggested there should be ways to include men both at the discussion level and the grassroots level. These discussions should also welcome religion and theology. Efforts and initiatives taken in the gender realm should be taken with a light-push, not with so much pressure.

UNICEF noted that the agency was still trying to figure out how to work with faith-based actors and communities on gender issues. The agency is aware of the challenges of working with religious leaders from their own experience. It is a learning process for the agency. In Yemen, the issues of concern is early and child marriage. In a particular case regarding child marriage, the help of the local faith community was pivotal in the duration of the case in a Yemini court. The judge in the court was an “enlightened man.” He turned to the local sheikh for support. The role of the sheikh and the help of the local faith community organization were very important for the outcome of the case. There are partnership between the UNFPA, UNICEF, and FBOs on FGM. There are also many instances of successful engagement with religion in this sphere. Issues of gender should be looked at as interagency issues. Gender is a tense issue within the UN agencies.

A recent UNAIDS report revealed that young women are twice as likely as other groups to be living with HIV. There are many underlying issues that make women the most vulnerable group here. These issues include: women being in charge of their own sexuality; social and economic protection of women; gender-based violence as a significant number of victims reported that their first sexual encounter was forced. Some faith communities are not happy with the data in the report because they think it makes their communities look more sexually active.

Challenging the Secular vs. Religious Binary and Bridging Divides

Some research was shared about how gender equality dynamics unfolded in women’s rights groups in Egypt, mentioning the polarization inherent between two kinds of groups: secular feminists on the one hand, and other women who engaged with Islamist groups. There remain many who are surprised by the prominent role women play in the decision-making and implementation of Islamist programmes, and by the fact that many of these women in religiously affiliated groups are in fact, intelligent, educated and making their own minds up about becoming a part of such politicized

“We need to work on this together because it’s an issue for both women and men, for both boys and girls”

religious groups. Such women can also be actively involved in decision making process within these groups. It is noteworthy that dating from the 1980s in some parts of the Arab world, a debate has since been taking place among some human rights actors, over whether radical Islamists, or militants who took up arms, should have a right to legal representation informed by a human rights' mandate. This form of ideological split between secularists (sometimes referred to as 'liberals'), and Islamists, therefore dates back several decades, and can involve top secular women activists leading the push against religious leaders and religious women activists, without necessarily being informed about the religious discourse itself.

The underlying theme to the struggles that secular institutions have in their engagement with FBOs is in the secular institutions' framing of issues when they first come to engage with religious institutions or representatives. Secular NGOs can, in many countries, come across as confrontational when they discuss issues of gender, LGBT rights, sexual violence, and more. The need identified by UN and FBO participants, is that dialogues around these perceived binaries among women's rights activists (secular or faith-based) issues are necessary and timely and need to be systematically hosted.

Just as in other development contexts there is a popular misconception within the context of gender equality that religion is 'the problem' with women's rights. But many maintain that it is not religion per se, but the lack of understanding within the religion, and the challenges presented by interpreting and living religious texts. The solutions identified include better educational systems, and, interestingly, better learning and literacy around and with religious rhetoric and practice.

Within Western academia, one still has to utilize Western concepts to describe events or dynamics, then link these events back to another Western theoretical construct, for something to be considered knowledge. This also applies within the women's rights fields. In many Western contexts, women's rights NGOs have grown to become a powerful constituency, with implications on impacting for governance. Many of these women's rights NGOs can feel somewhat threatened by the UN's attention to FBOs. Some women's rights entities feel that this kind of multilateral engagement may even be fundamentally against human rights. Bridging the secular and faith-based narratives on human rights therefore, is needed, and a suggested model of doing so could be the manner in which this bridging of the two narratives occurred within the context of HIV/AIDS.

Another form of bridging which needs to take place is with regard to the North-South divide. In spite of the rhetoric around inclusion, many of the actors around these emerging secular-religious policy tables today remain largely northern and largely Christian. This has to be actively and deliberately countered. The challenges of religious representativity are real and complicated. At the same time, it is often the case that focusing on religious “leadership” often precludes involving women of faith – in spite of the fact that they are the ones in charge of organizing, managing and the day to day administering of faith-based services. Either religious leadership has to be broadly (re)defined, or the very criteria for engagement of faith-based actors around the development policy tables has to change, to accommodate the voices and experiences of those who have the actual knowledge of serving girls’, women’s, children’s and marginalized peoples’ lives in almost every community around the world –i.e. women of faith. At the same time, however, utilizing gender equality as the bully pulpit from which to criticize (and sometimes even stigmatize or shame) religious leadership and religious institutions, can and does backfire. For these sort of attitudes generate a defensiveness, and an entrenched attitude among some religious leaders.

Either religious leadership has to be broadly (re) defined, or the very criteria for engagement of faith-based actors around the development policy tables has to change to accommodate the voices and experiences ...of women of faith

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Other Dynamics of Gender Equality

LGBT Issues –

One of the most “difficult dialogues” currently being negotiated between gender and religion, is around the LGBT issues. Many younger believers within religious communities, some governments, and many staff members themselves, want to be more open and vocal about these issues. For the younger generation, the issues around LGBT rights are issues of emancipation and civil rights. This terrain requires skilled negotiation and timely ‘hosting’ by those in leadership positions within governmental, intergovernmental as well as religious entities.

Knowing Our Own History –

It is important for actors and organizations involved in development to ‘know their own history’. This historical awareness is especially required in the work of gender equality and women’s rights where being aware of the progress achieved can help foreground and move the movement further.

Notes:



The road to coordination between donors – multilaterals and faith-based organizations

Including Voices of 'Others'

Reflecting on this consultation and the series of meetings that had taken place prior to this consultation, such as the World Bank Conference on Religion and Sustainable Development, participants admitted that the invitation selection and process to these types of meetings could be improved. This was reflective of the diversity and inclusivity notions that were advocated for throughout the consultation. At any meeting or event, it is important to ask the question of “Who’s not at the table?” Participating FBOs identified one of their major concern as the narrow participation of diverse faith partners in this kind of dialogue. A participant noted that there is a minimal representation of Muslims at this consultation and other similar meetings while other religions are totally absent. Often, the one same Muslim FBO is recognized and present. This can be addressed by reconsidering the selection criteria with which faith based actors and organizations are selected and invited for meetings and partnerships. Mechanisms should be created both at the national and regional level to convene the different religious voices.

“We are very good at making statements...But we are all challenged to be accountable”

The other actors acknowledged the FBOs’ concerns from their own perspective. A speaker from the UN admitted that in creating partnerships with Civil Society and Faith Based Organizations, the UN needs to be clearer in its identification of actors and pay careful attention to the challenges of having a broad spectrum of faith representation. The UN does have an inter-agency task force to engage with FBOs on development, which is only recently being known across the system. Every year, the UN staff college and UN also host a strategic exchange for UN staff and FBOs. The UN speaker who informed the participants of these initiatives suggested for the creation of a similar inter-agency team at the national level. Representatives from Christian FBOs highlighted the lack of platforms for dialogue and discourse within the Christian community. The existing foras on religion and development should

be widened so that both inter-faith and intra-faith conversations can take place. In addition to improving the representation of faith communities, the missing link with member states needs to be address as well. Member states need to be linked together with other agencies and religious groups. One way of creating the link is by building the capacity of faith networks at the national level through which the governments can reach out to FBO more conveniently.

The location of those being invited should be considered as well to avoid being very territorial. Conversations that showcase diversity and inclusion are happening already and need more spotlight. Another important aspect of including the voices of others is to make sure that diverse languages are integrated into discussions and agenda. To work with faith based actors and organizations, potential partners need to learn how to speak a language that embodies their religious literacy. This is not just faith, languages that are informed by other disciplines and methodologies, such as sociology, need to be integrated as well.

Religious and Developmental Literacies

Both religious and secular institutions need to work on the issue of literacy, specifically religious literacy for the secular institutions (knowledge of the role of religious in social, political economic and financial realities). On the other hand, faith-based organizations engaged in social service delivery at the community, as well as regional and global levels, were also called upon to develop a modicum of common religious human rights' literacy specifically among the religious leaders they work with. Here, Indonesia was cited as an instance where there is a lot of such work being undertaken through partnerships between UNICEF and the Indonesia n Council of Churches.

Accountability

Participants stressed the need to go beyond the discussion of issues towards action that is informed by the insights gain through the dialogue, as well as through experiences of learning through engaging on issues which are increasingly emerging as critical on the global scene, such as migration. Accountability will be key in the move towards action. Many agreed that the formation of clear action plans based on the discussions held, would be a step towards ensuring accountability to one another at least. Through an action plan that lays out guidelines and timelines for different programs

will forced everyone involved to stay accountable, including the bilaterals FBOs, and UN agencies. In addition, some of the FBO representatives called for their organizations to be involved in the discussions and mechanisms around accountability, which the various multilaterals were engaged in enacting in tandem with the Post 2015 SDGs.

All acknowledged that providing concrete data will be essential for all partners. At the same time, pushing for actual resolutions from institutions like the UN continues to be critical in moving issues and goals forward. For example, some noted that thanks to the Human Rights Council deliberations and addenda, establishing the definition of sexuality in a more nuanced manner became helpful for advocacy efforts – including within religious communities and organizations. A participant identified “data, partnership, resolution, public support, and safe-space as essential” to making progress with the SDG goals.

While expecting accountability and results, there should also be encouragement and empowerment. A speaker reminded participants that a lot of powerful and touching stories were told at the consultation. These stories are important and good reminders of why this work is important. Development is full of technical targets, indicators, and actions plans. It can be hard to navigate this sphere if one is not familiar with it. What is helpful is for the incoming organization or actor is to communicate what it can provide, contribute, and commit to. It is good to go back the unique selling points – which are your stories. The stories are convincing and encouraging – they help explain why you are a relevant partner. The speaker also reminded the participants of what is at stake: “One hundred men in a bus own half the world’s wealth. The social justice is unacceptable... Who else, but the FBOs can bring an end to this injustice.”

Communicating the SDGs

The communication and publication of SDGs needs to be improved. A participant observed that there is a “New York Bubble” around the SDGs as the SDG goals are not heard about and discussed further outside of establishments in New York. While improving the SDG framework, initiatives need to be taken to create events and ways to raise more awareness of the SDGs. Particular aspects of the SDG agenda need more attention. A participating called on the UN to raise more attention and work on the issue of violence against women at the inter-agency and national level. There has not been a concerted action at the national level to convene FBO around this

issue. Because of the lack of engagement with the FBOs, 50% of the world's population is being left behind on this discourse.

As participants examined the framework of the SDG agenda, they discussed what role the SDG Agenda should play in the partnerships and meetings between the different participating actors. Various participants posed questions about the practicality and ownership of the SDGs. The FBOs admitted it was an important time for the FBOs to get involved so their perspectives are considered while the SDG was being set. As FBOs, they have to figure out how the secular framework of the SDG agenda relates to their religious and spiritual values. Recognizing the fact this is something the FBOs are trying to figure out helps in understanding the constraints that Faith based actors and organizations have about the SDGs. While many religious development actors have yet to fully engage with the SDG agenda, the participating FBOs expressed their commitment to the ongoing research and development of the agenda. As a whole, participants agreed to convene and work formally around the SDG goals. Participants admitted that it is more practical to work around the SDG agenda. In thinking about a framework for development, the SDG agenda is quite good and the indicators for the goals will also be set in the next twelve months. There are indeed ways to broaden and improve the agenda.

There was consensus that the new Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, or Agenda 2030, offers the great chance to address global challenges as one human family and built new global partnerships. The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be achieved by involving a wide range of state and non-state actors in the industrialised, emerging and developing countries. Religious actors and communities are crucial in this process, since religious values influence the thoughts and actions of billions of people around the world. Religious actors are local providers of essential services such as health care and education. They advocate for proper governance and accountability. And, religious actors have been long time implementing partners with the wide range of government, multilateral development and humanitarian institutions.⁹

⁹ Based on these discussions, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) facilitated a first International Donor Meeting on Religion and Development in Frankfurt in August/September 2015. The main outcome was a consensus that an international coordination mechanism on religion and development should be developed.

The meeting underlined the challenge translating emerging international consensus that religion matters into concrete and coordinated actions towards viable partnership for sustainable development. Therefore it was proposed to learn from each other's experiences and to join efforts through a more structured dialogue among bilateral and multilateral donors since there are challenges that specifically apply to state / supranational agencies.

Youth and Social Media

Efforts are lacking in engagement with youth and social media. It is important to keep reminding others the importance of working on education initiatives, especially on girl's access to education. In conflict situations, work on education issues offers an opportunity for collaboration and dialogue. The FBOs need to get more involved with the implementation of education initiatives and goals. It is important to recognize that the youth are victims of gender-based violence and structural violence, such as ecological damage occurring as a result of climate change. Social media is an effective means through which outreach can be done with youth. Surprisingly, there is not enough utilization of social media at the moment. One organization shared that it could not find one organization in the Middle East that was working on issues of religion and peace through social media.

'Parked' Questions Going Forward

Many questions were raised during the discussion to which, ultimately, there was consensus that either there was no one solution, or they were ongoing questions to be 'struggled with'. These 'parked' questions therefore, may well continue to remain on the horizon of the development practitioners in secular, religious, bilateral, multi lateral, NGO and other spheres, as the engagement continues. Some of the most salient of these are herein noted:

For faith-based Organizations:

1. How do I/we involve more secular policy makers on/in our work? How can we reach out to engage more and better?
2. How do we protect those who dare to be peacemakers and mediators?

UN and Bilateral Organizations:

1. What if it is “We” who need to change?
2. Should we look for new partners, if so how?
3. Are we addressing root causes or acting out of fear?
4. How do we avoid “Top 100 Religious Leaders or Organizations?”



Key outcomes

1. Continue 'Safe' Convening and Catalytic Synergies

Preserving the sacredness of the space and time they shared during the consultation by creating a more systematic way of meeting regularly with each other. The space described as “sacred and safe” will allow actors from different backgrounds and institutions to have honest discussion about different development issues they are working on. A participant referred to those attending the consultation as “a community of practitioners to emphasize the sacredness of the space”. Regarding questions of location, such as where and who would house the space, it was decided that the different organizations and institutions that participated in this consultation could regularly host the space. Participants also expressed consensus for the creation of a common calendar system through which relevant meetings and events can be shared amongst each other.

2. Develop Multi-religious Narratives on the SDGs - A Resource Tool for all Development Practitioners

The SDG agenda is quite narrow in its secular framework. One way of broadening and integrating faith into the agenda is by developing inter-religious narratives on the SDGs. Theological and religious wisdom on development can enhance and expand the current scope of the SDG framework. For example, inter-religious narratives on family values can inform a development issue like children’s health. Finding the links between religious values and development issues can help in communicating the idea that religion and development are not exclusive of each other. During the consultations, bilaterals, multilaterals and representatives from the faith traditions and development organizations agreed that in addition to technical and structural issues, theology should be involved in the discourse (“theology matters”). As a result, a proposal to publish a paper on the perspectives and the contribution of world religions /indigenous traditions to development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with international participation was well received and approved. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has subsequently offered to facilitate the preparation of such a document and

commissioned the GIZ Sector Programme Values, Religion and Development with its implementation. The publication will be presented in English during the next international conference on Religion and Sustainable Development in February 17th-18th, 2016 in Berlin.

Inter-religious narratives on gender equality can be extremely helpful as well. For example, it was argued that sometimes an economic perspective on gender equality can be more convincing when combined with a women's rights perspective. A participant from Norway explained how the narrative around Norway's wealth is explained through highlighting women's economic contributions to the country's economy.

BMZ and GIZ will take the lead on developing a concept note that makes a case for the development of inter-religious narratives on the SDGs. The finalized document listing the various multi-religious narratives on development, will be presented at the Religion and Development Conference that BMZ will be holding in Berlin in February 2016.

3. Develop Faith-Inspired Indicators and Measurement for SDGs.

Governments are playing a key role in developing the indicators and measurements for SDGs. The process of defining the SDG indicators is similar to the process that took place with the MDGs. While governments prefer more technical indicators, the civil society organizations have huge potential to contribute their own perspectives on how the indicators should be defined. This is where FBOs can work together with government and multilateral agencies in developing faith-inspired SDG indicators and measurements. [See attached Concept Note].

4. Outreach to Engage the grassroots through intra- and inter-religious initiatives. Convene Intra-and Inter-faith around contributions to SDGs.

It was agreed that there needs to more engagement with people who are doing things on the ground, meaning grassroots level engagement. This engagement with the grassroots level can be conducted through intra- and inter-religious initiatives. Both intra- and inter-religious initiatives are important in mobilizing the faith communities around the SDGs. Intra-religious initiatives will help in creating dialogue within a faith community

which is not happening enough, especially in the conflict contexts where intra-religious collaboration around SDG issues, such as the education of youth, could serve as keys to peace making. Inter-religious initiatives will give a religious platform for different faith communities to get together and develop their own narratives on the SDGs. It is critical for the faith communities convene on their own as much as important it is for them to engage with governments and other multilateral institutions.

Islamic Relief will convene Muslim FBOs for a meeting on the SDGs, to help create a Muslim platform for sustainable development. The meeting will give particular attention to the issues of Gender, Finance, and Environment. Global Ethics and ACT alliance will be organizing a religion and development platform as well.

5. Identify and support Inter-faith Technical cooperation opportunities

1: Integrated Approaches to Gender Equality

There is a lot of work being done in regards to gender equality in different spheres, from the UN to the FBOs level. Participants agreed to find ways to create synergy between the ongoing initiatives that bring gender quality and faith into conversation. The Bahai' International Community is taking the lead on bringing together UN and faith-based groups on gender equality, at the global level.

2: Religion, Peace and Security

Faith-based actors and communities hold significant influence in conflict contexts. Till now, it has been difficult to work with religious actors in conflict because it is hard to identify who is who. Instead of just looking at faith as being a challenge or problem in conflicts, the influence faith based actors and communities have can be utilized to work towards peace and security. Intra-faith dialogue will be critical here, as collaboration is needed between different groups of one particular faith community. KAICIID will take the lead on convening a multi-faith gathering to discuss the Peace and security nexus and what value FBOs add to this area. UNFPA, on behalf of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force, committed to take the lead on a consultation to explore the nexus between religion, development violent extremism.¹⁰

¹⁰ This consultation was co-convened by UNFPA on behalf of the UN Task Force, with the World Council of Churches, the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN, and the Mission of the Government of Finland to the United Nations, among others, in January 2016.

3: Enhance Religious Engagement in the Global Integrity Movement

An understanding of ethics is important for ensuring accountability and integrity. In line with this, participants agreed that religion should be prominent in the global integrity movement. Participants concluded that government and institutions need to be held accountable for the promises they make about issue like poverty and violence. There is an agreement to end poverty but no conversation how and what models work. There needs to be more clear moves away from policies that generate poverty and mass violence. agreement to end poverty but no conversation how and what models work. There needs to be more clear moves away from policies that generate poverty and mass violence.

Another important issue in the global integrity movement is corruption. Corruption is a challenge for all institutions, whether it is a government or religious institution. The Salvation Army shared its perspective and experience on dealing with corruption within the organization, which could work as a model for other organizations. The issue of corruption does not get as much attention as it should within the larger framework of SDGs. A speaker called for a global civic movement focused on the issue of corruption, a movement that would include multilateral and bilateral support.

4: Enhancing Multi-religious collaboration for social development at regional and country level

There is a need to pilot national or regional level meeting that enables multi-religious engagement with bilateral donors and multilateral institutions. The suggested regional focus was for East Africa. Digni will take the lead with organizing this consultation, which could also take the form of the DUF III – wherein reporting back on the projects undertaken would be solicited, and the substantive discussions would focus on the nexus between religion – conflict and development dynamics.

6. Mentioning FBO Engagement in UN Guidance Notes on SDGs for UN Country Offices

To help different UN agencies and branches integrate the SDG agenda into their work, UNDP has prepared guidance notes on the roll-out of the SDGs which will be sent to all UN Country Teams in 2016. These guidance notes will elaborate on how to work with SDGs and UNDP committed to undertake to reference the importance of engagement with faith-based actors in these Notes.

7. Understanding Faith-Based Financing/Resourcing Development and Humanitarian Work

There is a common misconception that faith-based actors are just recipients of aid. This assumption can be challenged by highlighting the long-existing tradition among faith-based actors and organizations in mobilizing community resources, harnessing human resources, raising and harvesting diverse capacities for development and sustainability. Faith-based communities tend to take different and creative approaches to mobilizing resources, which can inform the work of secular organizations. It was agreed that a background research document on religious financing and a subsequent global consultation will be co-sponsored by the OSCE, UNDP and GIZ in 2016. Meanwhile, the UN Task Force will convene, together with key international faith-based entities, in the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit, a policy roundtable on this theme.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1) EVIDENCE:

We have to show faith-based incentives that work towards the development goals. The alignment of evidence should be around development goals.

2) MORE VIGOROUS ACTIVITY ON THE POLICY LEVEL:

There is a regrettable absence of faith in the ebola report. It is important to notice the note of the input for these kinds of reports. Get activists to reach out to faith communities. It should be normal for policy makers to reach out to faith-based organizations. The faith communities should improve the inclusivity of the faith bodies by widening their circle.

2) AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN A COUNTRY:

Create areas of activity for faith at the bilateral level. A lot of faith communities do not like mapping. On the bilateral and multicultural level, it is necessary to formalize forcible agreements with faith-based leaders.

3) STRATEGIC INVESTMENT AND CO-FUNDING:

It is important to consider whether FBO communities can shift the dynamics from being donor recipients to equal partners in their collaborations with donors and multilateral agencies. Friendships should be encouraged to promote full engagement between actors. There should be regular forms of exchange that allow participants to connect the dots together on their gatherings.



Reaping the faith dividend

We have much to celebrate in the hard work it took both FBOs and secular institutions over the last half a century, to arrive at a relative “normalization” of multi-lateral outreach to faith actors in the development field. This is exemplified in many way by the more active role played by the World Bank since 2014. But we would be wise to pay heed to certain concerns.

Rather than detail all of them, some of the most salient are herein noted.

Overemphasizing Religious Leaders and religious leadership:

There is no doubt that religious leadership is critical. But they should not be made to exemplify all religious communities, actors and organizations. The world of faith is vast, and even the processes of identifying and ‘naming’ leadership differs from one faith community to another. Not only that, but in fact, religious leaders are largely men – with only rare cases (speaking from a relative global and multi-faith level) are women assigned these traditional leadership roles.

So to limit the outreach to religious leaders is, at once, to:

- unfairly - and unrealistically - burden the very same religious leaders with the task of speaking for billions on all things;
- over-represent and eschew the religious representation to Christian elements (given the relative ease of identifying those “leaders”);
- risk a gender imbalanced representation of faith communities and human lives as a whole; and
- effectively exclude and silence gender equality from the discourse of “common concerns” – because the fact is, religious leaders, when they come together across diverse religious groups and countries, rarely, if ever, agree to unabridged versions of ‘gender equality’.

Over-moralizing’ the Development Agenda and Partnerships:

By seeking to give the world of faith a role which is primarily ‘moral’ in nature and even labelling it as such, we are effectively reinforcing the role of religious actors as a ‘moral compass’ to international development efforts. While this may indeed be consonant with the role that religious leaders apportion themselves, this does not necessarily affirm the international human rights agenda. In fact, by prioritizing “the moral narrative” of religion, we risk compromising on the universality of human rights – for not

all those who would occupy the moral space agree with the value or relevance of human rights. While we may appreciate and hold diverse and contentious views on universal human rights, given the serious threat posed by religious extremism and sectarianism, which is increasing the contentious spaces in civil and political discourse, now is not a wise time to ignore or walk away from the value of universal values, including justice, security, and equity.

Increasing the rhetoric of religion does not automatically lead to social inclusion

Elevating the value of morality, and those who speak in its name, is not the same as ensuring inclusive civic discourse, engagement and equitable access. To name religious leaders, for instance, as the upholders of all that is “moral” which could thus hold political and civic leaders accountable, may well be possible. But it is nevertheless to elevate religion onto a pedestal. To elevate the role of religious actors is not to level the playing field of development cooperation. And leveling the playing field between religious social service providers and “behavior changers” on the one hand, and international lawmakers and secular service providers on the other, is where the real gaps in international development have been for the last 70 years. To seek to increase the recognition of the value of religion in public life is critical and necessary in an international development culture characterized by a hegemonic secular western ethos. This ethos has increasingly come under attack –and its upholders, invariably women’s rights and human rights actors – are struggling at best, in many non-western countries, to at least find a common ground between faith and rights. So there is little question that there is potential advantage to bridging between these discourses. But again, as the experience of the Middle Eastern region continues to demonstrate, expanding the space for religion is not necessarily an expansion of the public space for all. In fact, there are legitimate concerns that religious rhetoric, especially that upheld and characterized by traditional religious institutions, is not about systematic and non-judgmental inclusion, but in fact, can be about specific and demarcated territories of identity.

Prioritizing Moral Agency over Service Provision

The thing about moral agency is, it is not automatically translated into providing for the less privileged regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion and class. Faith-based development organizations, and religious institutions, uphold and invigorate a centuries’ old tradition of actual social service to communities. In fact, the credibility of any faith institution is significantly enhanced through its social service community outreach.

As an international secular development and humanitarian community, there is a natural affinity with service provision – after all, that is what the UN (and the World Bank and other such development institutions) work with governments to enable and enhance. Thus it would make sense that the emphasis on building and strengthening systems of service provision should continue to inform and guide the faith-based outreach. In other words, we partner because we serve the gaping basic needs better and more efficiently. But that to be distinguished from “we partner because you are moral agents”. Both are important, but they are not the same. What needs to be avoided is the prioritization of moral agency over actual service provision. The latter also requires putting money where our mouths are.

Potentially Compromising the “Chosen Ones”

It is a fact that in the shifting sands of contemporary geopolitics, multilateral mechanisms such as the UN are not as powerful - or effective - as they may have been created to be. Even attacks against United Nations’ offices and officials are, unfortunately, not uncommon. While this relative loss of impact and stature of the UN may not be universal, or indeed spell the end of this venerable institution, they nevertheless must be factored into an analysis of its role in a changing global landscape. In turn, whom the UN reaches out to in the larger and more complex world of religion has to be evaluated with the same level of realism. The question must be asked: do we add value, or do we possibly dent the credibility of the religious leader(s) we seek?

Self-Reflexive or Changing ‘The Other’?

Some of the attempts at outreach to faith-based communities tend to be informed by a vague notion that ‘we’ (read: the UN and other secular development actors) will succeed, somehow, in ‘changing them’ (read religious institutions). At least we should try. This also happens with some religious actors: ‘they (read the UN) will eventually see the light if we keep talking to/working with them’. These approaches miss an important point: it is not necessarily about changing one another’s ways or beliefs for that matter. The genius is that it ought to be about what we learn about ourselves, our own institutions, attitudes, perspectives and approaches, through working together. For we have little control over our own institutions, let alone over others’. But when it comes to accountability, each institution ostensibly has its own complex processes and mechanisms. So why attempt to change the other, rather than looking within?

Priorities

The above dynamics continue to inform the needs of the global discussions and engagements around the religion and development nexus. At the same time, efforts around the UN and wider multi-lateral system to engage with religious actors continue to both intensify and multiply - which also underlines the need to ensure systematization of principled approaches of partnership, knowledge-building and management around these endeavors, as well as pragmatic risk reduction strategies which all sides need to consider and collaborate proactively towards developing.

Achievements

The consultations and analysis undertaken to date between bilaterals/donors, the UN and faith-based actors, under the auspices of the United Nations, have to date, achieved the following:

1. Discuss respective concerns, experiences, and current milestones in the dynamics of religion and development;
2. Consider the impact and/or requirements of such partnerships given the Post 2015 MDG process and the SDG processes are progressing and moving towards shared development goals;
3. Consider the opportunities to both create and consolidate joint efforts towards calling for specific development priorities/goals (bearing in mind the systematic emphasis on and intersections with human rights and gender equality issues). Suggested thematic areas which continue to require more dedicated focus and collation, and management of knowledge both within the UN and with faith and secular civil society partners, focus around poverty, climate change, health (including SRHR, HIV/AIDS), women's empowerment, governance, and conflict, peace and security.
4. Affirm the creation of an informal and loose global network of development peers as 'advisors' on religion and development dynamics in different institutional contexts, with the ongoing possibility of sub-networks focusing on specific thematic interventions/areas to be formed spontaneously and led by interested parties .
5. Affirm the idea of a coordinating modality with a global purview, which would attempt to map out the various sites of engagement bringing together religious actors and issues with and around SDG dynamics. This endeavor could begin with the bilateral donors' own activities and initiatives, and seek to engage multilaterals as well as FBOs into its advocacy, knowledge sharing and capacity building engagements.

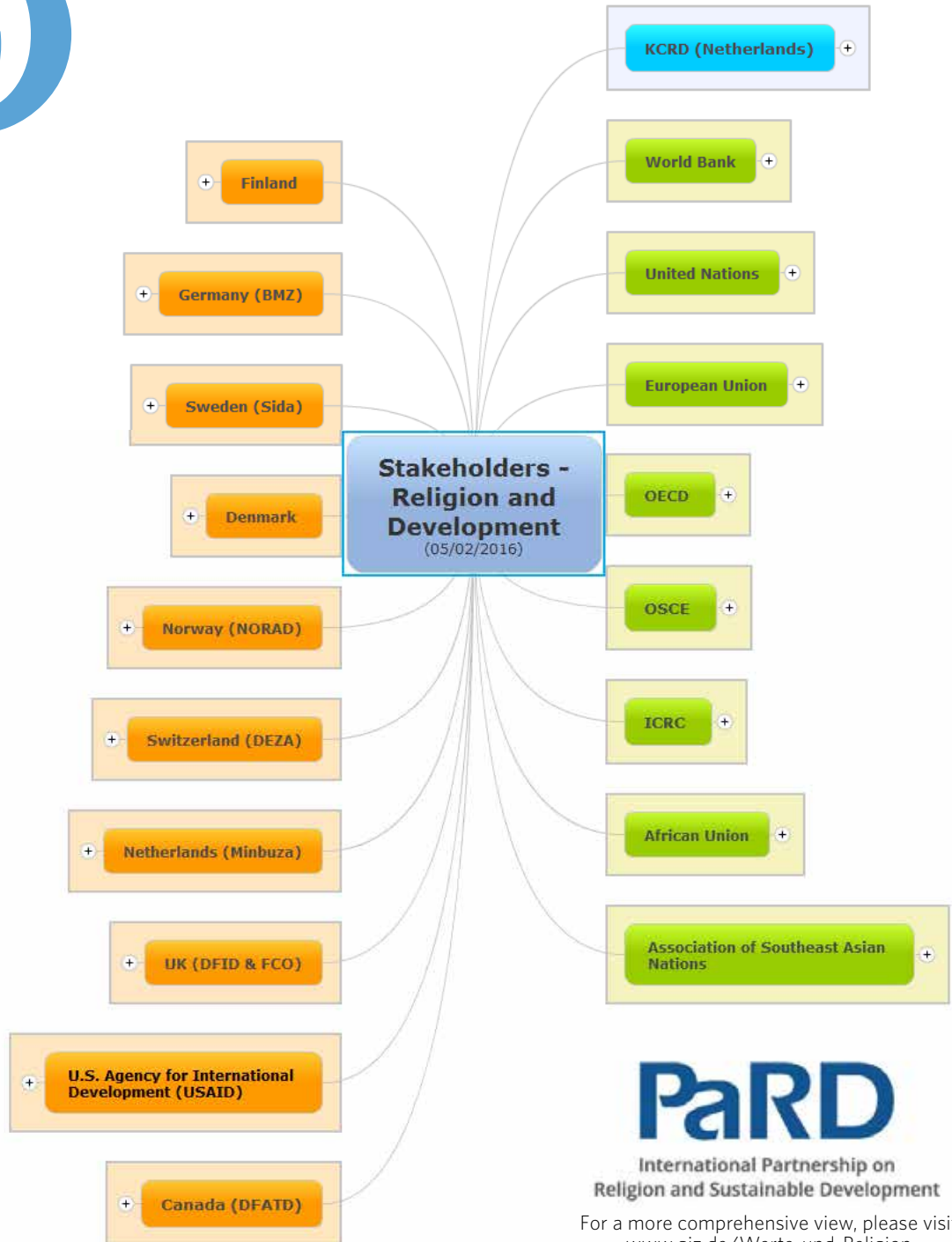
If we look just 5 to ten years' back, there is no doubt we have come a long way in the journey of engagement between diverse secular development entities and their counterparts in the faith-based and faith-inspired arenas. The journey has critical milestones, many of which have been achieved – and herein written about. Each milestone generates its own learnings, roadmaps and directions. So while we have moved ahead, we should also have realized that the journey has many turns, curves in the road, stops, and changes in direction. And for each of these we require constant learning, systematic adjustments, and a determination to be constructively self-critical as individuals, and as institutions.

New York
March-April 2016

Notes:

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Annex 1



PaRD

International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development

For a more comprehensive view, please visit:
www.giz.de/Werte-und-Religion

Annex 2

The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development / Religion and Development [IATF-FBOs]

History

The UN IATF-FBOs, or UN Task Force on Religion and Development, first came together informally as individual members of the UN General Assembly's Tripartite Forum in 2007. In July 2007, the High-level Dialogue of the General Assembly on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace and Informal Interactive Hearing with Civil Society, including Non-Governmental Organizations and the Private Sector, took place under the auspices of the Office of the President of the General Assembly (OPGA). UNFPA, together with the UN Alliance of Civilizations, DESA, and the OPGA provided technical support and formed part of a 'Task Force' convened by the OPGA. Part of the emphasis of this effort was to ensure a broad-based and deliberate engagement of religious NGOs as a critical part of the civil society representation.

The success of this Interactive Hearing in general, and the collaboration between and among diverse UN Offices in particular in engaging religious NGOs (FBOs) was brought to the attention of the then powerful women Executive Directors of UNFPA and UNICEF in particular, with a suggestion to use this collaboration to gather more UN offices under a UN Inter-Agency format with a specific mandate to focus on engaging with FBOs.

In 2008, UNFPA convened these FBO and civil society focal points from UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO to its Global FBO Forum, hosted in Istanbul in October. In 2009, two policy roundtables were co-hosted by these UN offices in New York, inviting global FBO partners to discuss UN-FBO collaboration and outreach. One of the outcomes of this was the first set of 'Guidelines for Engaging FBOs as Cultural Agents of Change' which UNFPA developed.

Also in 2008-2009, UNAIDS convened some of the same UN agencies together with its FBO partners in Geneva to develop and launch a Strategy of Engagement with FBOs around prevention, treatment and care of HIV/AIDS.

On November 12, 2008, world leaders met at the UN for a Debate on the Culture of Peace wherein a draft resolution on “promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, was introduced by the then Philippines’ President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. In her presentation, the Philippines President maintained that one of the resolution’s most relevant points was the affirmation that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue were important components of the culture of peace. This draft resolution was especially relevant to the United Nations as the Secretary-General had issued a report on interreligious and intercultural activities for the first time in the Organization’s history. The resolution also asked that a United Nations decade be proclaimed for interreligious dialogue.

Thanks to the collaboration of the various UN agencies around the issues of faith-based engagement, and the advice and wisdom shared by the then World Bank lead on faith engagement, DESA reached out to the wider UN agencies inviting them to contribute to the 2009 (and subsequent) SG Reports on interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Today the contributors to this Report, which is now also combined with the SG Report on a Culture of Peace, from within the UN system continue to expand as the membership the UN Inter-Agency Task Force itself also expands.

In 2010, the Principals of the various UN developmental entities, with the endorsement of the Head of the UN Development Group and Administrator of UNDP, approved a UNDG Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with FBOs for Development. In 2010, representatives of the various UN offices met officially as members of this Task Force, and developed the following Mission Statement and Terms of Reference, which continue to be modified as the learning among UN members, together with their World Bank colleagues, and the circumstances of the UN and the world of religious affairs, evolve.

Mission Statement

The IATF-FBOs supports the work of United Nations staff, towards the shared objective of learned, strategic and sustained engagement with key partners in the faith-based world, to support respective and collective efforts to realize international development goals.

Objectives:

- Provide a resource pool on partnerships with FBOs for colleagues within the United Nations as well as other developmental counterparts.

- Strengthen the integration of FBOs partnerships within broader civil society outreach and provide informed policy guidance upon request.

Activities: To that end, *The Inter-Agency Task Force members shall endeavour to:*

- Serve as a convenor of *multilateral* experience and expertise around engagement with religious actors, within the UN and with international intergovernmental counterparts.
- Serve as a forum to consult and engage within the UN and with non-UN international partners on the intersections of UN mandated areas with issues of religion and faith, based on diverse UN experiences, evidence and analysis.
- Convene policy dialogues with *faith-based partners* and specialists on religion, development and humanitarian assistance, and provide policy support to UN entities when requested.
- Share tools, guidelines, information and other capacity building resources including strategies of engagement, around ongoing outreach and engagement between diverse UN offices and faith-based NGOs, Religious Leaders as well as diverse religious institutions.
- Provide a forum to internally reflect on and critically analyze experiences, lessons, challenges and best practices learned through diverse partnerships with FBOs at country, regional and global levels;
- Support members in developing and/or ensuring clarity and consistency in outreach to/with faith-based partners, to systematize and strategically inform the modalities of engagement around different development, peace and security, as well as human rights endeavors.
- Convene regular joint UN system-wide activities and initiatives with a view to engaging faith actors in a learned and strategic manner around shared global objectives.

Members:

UNAOC/ Alliance of Civilizations	UNAIDS
UNDESA	UNDP
UNDPI	UNESCO
UNEP	UNFPA
UNHCR	UNICEF
UNHabitat	UNV
WHO	WB
UN - CTEC (Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Committee)	
UN - Office of SGSR Prevention of Genocide and Right to Protect	

Annex 3

Participating Organizations in DUF II Policy Roundtables

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Baha'i International, Berkley Center, Church in Action, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Danish Mission Council, Digni, Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD), European University Institute, GAVI, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Global Health Academy (University of Edinburgh), Globalethics.net, International Social, Justice Commission, Islamic Relief, Jewish Theological Seminar, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI LFC), King Abdullah bin Abdelaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Ministry for Foreign Affairs - Finland, Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD), National Religious Association for the Social Development [NRASD], Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, United Sikhs, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDPA, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, US Department of State, World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), Wilton Park, World Bank Group, World Council of Churches (WCC), World Vision International (WVI).

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every childbirth is safe and
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605 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10158
Tel. +1 212 297 5000
www.unfpa.org

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