

Global Voices on the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development





During PaRD's Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development 2022 more than 130 people participated in person

PaRD Matters!

Today's intricate and intertwined world needs collaboration. Strengthening dialogue and long-term engagement is not a mere aspiration but rather necessary if we truly want sustainable development. To nourish values that foster inclusivity and respectful collaboration at eye level is a prerequisite if we want to shape a just world where present and future generations can lead a meaningful life in dignity.

The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) embodies dialogue and collaboration in its true sense. This partnership was founded in 2016 based on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda: "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development."

PaRD's mission centres on fostering cooperation between religious and secular actors to address pressing global

challenges. It was born out of a vision to harness the vast wisdom, experiences, resources and networks of faith actors, and their manifold contributions to the SDGs, to humanitarian aid, and to human rights. The vision of PaRD is grounded in the fact that religious, spiritual, indigenous, and traditional values as well as wisdom shape the thoughts and actions of billions of people and inspire volunteers, initiatives, and organisations around the globe to act out of compassion for the good of humankind.

Since its inception, PaRD has been providing a safe space which fosters learning and collaboration among faith and other civil society organisations and initiatives, governments, multilaterals, and academia. Its partnership principles underscore the core values of inclusivity, respect, and mutual understanding. Today, PaRD has emerged as a unique global multi-stakeholder partnership which recognises the importance of multiplex collaboration in an increasingly multipolar world. Multiplex collaboration acknowledges the interconnectedness of actors and networks. It involves inclusive efforts by stakeholders across key sectors and levels of society, and encompasses considering their ability to leverage their unique strengths and resources in a complementary way. This presupposes a holistic approach that takes into account the contextual interdependencies within social, economic, and environmental systems. At a more visionary level, it involves cyclical thinking and measures development based on the well-being of humans, animals, and nature.



Long-term engagement and setting action-driven priorities is at the heart of PaRD. Through Workstreams and Taskforces working on issues such as environmental protection, peace and inclusivity, and in Annual Forums, PaRD members demonstrate their commitment to concrete outcomes such as practitioner guidelines and policy recommendations.

With members from various religious traditions from over 40 countries and several continents, PaRD taps into a diverse spectrum of expertise and networks. By leveraging the unique strengths of each of the over 160 members, and by pooling knowledge, skills, experiences, and resources, PaRD not only helps to avoid duplication but also amplifies culturally sensitive approaches to development, making them visible at a local, regional, and global level.

The partnership's approach to sustainable development showcases the pivotal role that faith, religious, spiritual, and indigenous actors play in addressing local and global challenges. By harnessing the collective strength of its members, PaRD keeps making a tangible difference in building an inclusive world where no one is left behind. Neither people nor nature.

This publication provides insights into the testimonies of those who have and are shaping the unique journey of this young partnership. They speak about their motivation for joining PaRD, share successes and challenges they are facing.

I wish all readers an inspiring read.

Khushwant Singh

PaRD Head of Secretariat



Justine Aenishaenslin
World Vision

Amplifying Faith Actors as Health Service Providers in Times of Crisis

Religious actors play a pivotal role in driving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the realm of health, says Justine Aenishaenslin, Health and Nutrition Technical Advisor at World Vision International, a Christian member organisation of PaRD.

Justine Aenishaenslin's entry into the world of PaRD came during her tenure as the Health and Nutrition Technical Advisor at World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organisation committed to improving the well-being of children and communities globally through development and relief initiatives. "From PaRD's earliest beginnings in 2016, World Vision has been actively involved in PaRD's Health Workstream," Aenishaenslin recalls. "It felt like a natural fit for my colleagues and me. The engagement as part of PaRD helped me learn new perspectives and expanded my networks significantly."

One of the key transformations in Aenishaenslin's approach came in the recognition that religious actors are paramount stakeholders in the development landscape. Her involvement with PaRD crystallised the understanding that these actors play a critical role in propelling the SDGs forward. "While I have always regarded religious institutions and community leaders as crucial stakeholders in development, since I joined PaRD I have become more attuned to the necessity of consulting and involving them in project planning and implementation. It

has heightened my awareness of their pivotal role in the development process," she reflects.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored this conviction. "There was evidence that some people in faith communities were spreading misinformation, fake-news and conspiracy theories regarding the pandemic – particularly when it came to the uptake of the COVID vaccine," Aenishaenslin recalls. "At the same time many people in

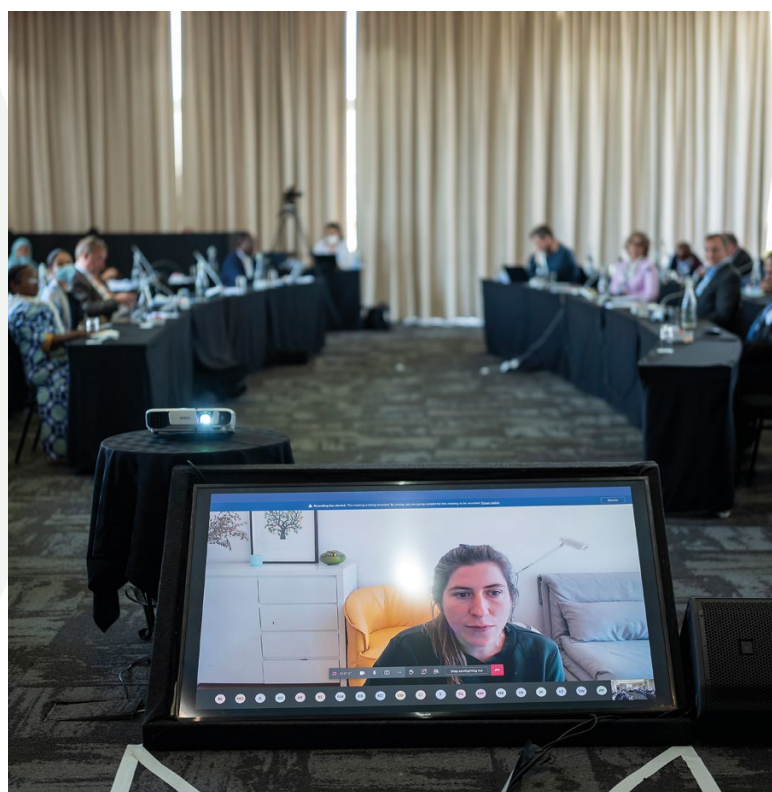
“ While I have always regarded religious institutions and community leaders as crucial stakeholders in development, since I joined PaRD I have become more attuned to the necessity of consulting and partnering with them in project planning and implementation.

Justine Aenishaenslin, Germany

“Advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights hinges on partnering with faith institutions and leaders. They occupy an indispensable role in fostering values and shaping social norms due to their influential social and political standing.

faith communities, were also at the forefront of addressing their communities’ immediate physical, spiritual, and psychological needs. They also created counter-narratives to misinformation based on their religious scriptures and continued offering support even when state services were inaccessible due to lockdowns.” Experiences like these highlight the crucial role of engaging volunteers inspired by their faith and religious leaders to promote accurate health information amongst their communities, thereby supporting public health efforts. “It’s a powerful reminder that including religious actors in our pursuit of the SDGs and viewing them as civil society partners complementary to governments is not just beneficial, but essential.”

Another illustrative example highlighting the significance of collaborating with religious actors can be found in the realm of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This sensitive topic, embraced by World Vision and fellow PaRD members such as the Faith to Action Network, also falls under the purview of the Health Workstream. Aenishaenslin argues that “advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights hinges on partnering with faith institutions and leaders. They occupy an indispensable role in fostering values and shaping social norms due to their influential social and political standing.” The services faith organisations and initiatives provide to ensure equitable access to sexual and repro-



Justine Aenishaenslin virtually joining PaRD’s Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development 2021 in South Africa.

ductive health services, especially for marginalised communities, is a fundamental pillar of a functioning civil society, filling in especially in nation-states where public services may be less accessible or not available to all.

Given the sensitivity of such issues, Aenishaenslin highlights the need for stakeholder engagement that respects religious and cultural contexts. She underscores the value of fostering dialogue and collaboration with civil society, including members of faith communities, to overcome blind spots and preconceived notions. In this context, Aenishaenslin identifies PaRD as an ideal platform for such constructive exchanges.

For Aenishaenslin, PaRD’s Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development 2022 in Indonesia stood as a testament to the partnership’s potential. Gathering over 130 participants from faith organisations, multilaterals, governments, and academia, the event showcased the transformative impact of collective collaboration. Aenishaenslin reflects: “Observing this diverse assembly diligently working to integrate religious actors into the SDG framework was genuinely inspiring.” This resonant experience highlighted PaRD’s exceptional capacity to harmonise diverse elements towards a common objective.

World Vision

Member type Faith-based organisation

PaRD member Since 2016

Further information www.wvi.org



Prof Dr Phil H Kamaruddin Amin
Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia

How Government Collaboration Can Strengthen Religion's Role in Sustainable Development

As the first governmental member from the Global South to join PaRD, Indonesia brings fresh insights and opens the door to transformative possibilities within global multistakeholder and multifaith cooperation. Prof Dr Phil H Kamaruddin Amin, Director General of Islamic Community Guidance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, explains how.

Indonesia, the world's largest island nation and country with the largest Muslim population, has found a unique way to integrate diverse approaches to religion's role in society. Officially promoting diversity and inclusivity, the government supports religious institutions and activities as well as the preservation of religious practices, and funds mosques, churches, temples, and other religious sites.

"Although Indonesia is not a theocratic country, religion plays a very important role in the life of its citizens," explains Prof Amin. With a vast majority of its population embracing faith, Indonesia ensures religious freedom through its constitution, creating an environment where spiritual values

coalesce with economic and socio-political progress. "Religious values have been and continue to play a fruitful and fundamental role in increasing the quality of economic and socio-political life in Indonesia," he adds.

“ PaRD enables the amplifying of often overlooked religious voices and positive contributions, reshaping the narrative of sustainable development.

Prof Dr Phil H Kamaruddin Amin,
Indonesia





Prof Dr Phil H Kamaruddin Amin (left) at the 2023 International Conference on Religious Moderation (ICROM): “Managing Religious Diversity in Public Sphere”

In 2023, the government of Indonesia joined PaRD. This partnership aligns perfectly with its aspirations. “We are very pleased to be able to interact with a wide range of global partners and share experiences on strengthening the role of religion in sustainable development,” Amin says. Indonesia is facing several development challenges, from poverty and environmental destruction to issues with child protection and women’s empowerment. In dealing with these challenges, international partnerships such as PaRD can be extremely impactful.

Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia

Member type Government

PaRD member Since 2023

Further information <https://kemenag.go.id>

“ Religious actors can be powerful catalysts. Fostering values that embrace inclusivity, diversity, and democracy can further elevate faith’s role in shaping global progress in a constructive manner.

That is why the Indonesian government decided after PaRD’s Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development 2022 in Bali to join the partnership. Amin reflects: “Being at the Annual Forum made us realise through first-hand experience the benefits of PaRD. It showed us that religious actors can be powerful catalysts. Fostering values that embrace inclusivity, diversity, and democracy can further elevate faith’s role in shaping global progress in a constructive manner.”

As Indonesia’s journey with PaRD unfolds, exciting possibilities are emerging on the horizon “One of the roles of the Ministry of Religion Affairs in Indonesia is strengthening religious education to fulfil citizens’ rights and also reduce problems like poverty,” Amin says. He hopes that dialogues within PaRD will bring forward innovative initiatives that foster equity and alleviate poverty. “PaRD enables the amplifying of often overlooked religious voices and positive contributions, reshaping the narrative of sustainable development,” says Amin. “And so far, the adept exchange of experiences and interactions with stakeholders to mutually inspire one another has been executed with remarkable finesse.”



Dr Zuhair Alharthi

The International Dialogue Centre – KAICIID

A Dynamic Alliance for Global Multistakeholder Dialogue and Sustainable Peace

One of the first multilateral organisations to join PaRD, The International Dialogue Centre – KAICIID sees its mission as fostering collaborative initiatives that transcend borders and religions. As Secretary General of KAICIID, Dr Zuhair Alharthi can attest that the partnership amplifies this by cultivating a series of dialogues that contribute to peaceful and sustainable societies.

KAICIID became a member of PaRD in 2016 aiming to engage with faith organisations, intergovernmental organisations, governments, and academia. The partnership, says Dr Zuhair Alharthi, KAICIID's Secretary General, is a unique alliance. It aligns with KAICIID's mission of promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue globally to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance understanding, and promote respectful cooperation. "It provides a space for long-term dialogue and helps us to fulfil our common mission of peaceful coexistence and sustainable development in a globalised world."

Being involved within PaRD has sparked impactful cross-border collaborations for KAICIID. One example Alharthi remembers fondly is the KAICIID Fellows Alumni Network's engagement in PaRD's 2022 Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development in Indonesia. The Forum saw the active participation of 30 fellows, a bright group of people from the South-Southeast Asia

region who will take over decision-making positions in future. They were able to directly engage with experts on the role of religious engagement in development cooperation and policy affairs there. "Through their participation, they contributed their perspectives and

“PaRD is a unique alliance. It provides a space for long-term dialogue and helps us to fulfil our common mission of peaceful coexistence and sustainable development in a globalised world.”

Dr Zuhair Alharthi, Portugal



“By becoming a PaRD member, organisations can engage with like-minded partners, amplify and promote their unique contributions and foster collaborative initiatives to advance the goals of sustainable development.

expertise, emphasising the importance of religious voices in shaping policies that promote social cohesion, peace, and sustainable development,” explains Alharthi.

Another impactful collaboration within PaRD involves KAICIID’s participation in the Food Security Taskforce, which led to mobilising funds and partners for a one-day workshop ‘Food Security Sensitisation, Awareness, and Policy Engagement’ in Nigeria. This collaboration brought together various PaRD members, including the World Council of Churches, and KAICIID partners in Nigeria, like the Interfaith Dialogue Platform. The initiative engaged 60 members of the Interfaith Dialogue Units, a platform in the Nigerian states of Benue and Rivers. These units comprise religious leaders, policymakers, and security officials who collaborate to address conflict threats and development issues in the region. Given the heightened food security risks resulting from violence in certain regions of the country, the initiative sought to increase the participation and role of religious leaders in conflict prevention and resolution. This, Alharthi says, can be seen as a testament to the way in which religious leaders serve as catalysts for conflict resolution and environmental stewardship.

An active member of PaRD, KAICIID plays a leading role in working toward the partnership’s objectives. The



During the one-day workshop ‘Food Security Sensitisation, Awareness, and Policy Engagement’ in Nigeria

organisation participates in the Steering Board, co-leads the Sustaining Peace Workstream, and collaborates on initiatives related to peacebuilding. As part of the Gender Workstream, KAICIID is contributing to annual global events such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). During the 66th CSW in 2022, KAICIID along with other supporters from Canada, Germany, Denmark, the African Union, and UNEP and in cooperation with other organisations, including with Islamic Relief Worldwide, Side by Side, ACT Alliance, World Vision, and the Lutheran World Federation, co-organised a side-event under the working title: “From the Grassroots to the Global: Why Climate Action Needs Women, Religious, and Local Actors.” Through this collaboration, Alharthi says, KAICIID was able to, “showcase its commitment to promoting inclusivity, gender equality, interreligious dialogue, and sustainable development.”

For the Secretary General, a key added value of PaRD is that it facilitates dialogues and joint initiatives, and enables policy guidance, ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing complex global challenges effectively. “By becoming a member, organisations can engage with like-minded partners, amplify and promote their unique contributions, and foster collaborative initiatives to advance the goals of sustainable development,” says Alharthi.

The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID)

Member type	Multilateral organisation
PaRD member	Since 2016
Further information	www.kaiciid.org



Kristian Westad Bertelsen
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Enhancing Inclusive Government Policies Through Multistakeholder Partnerships

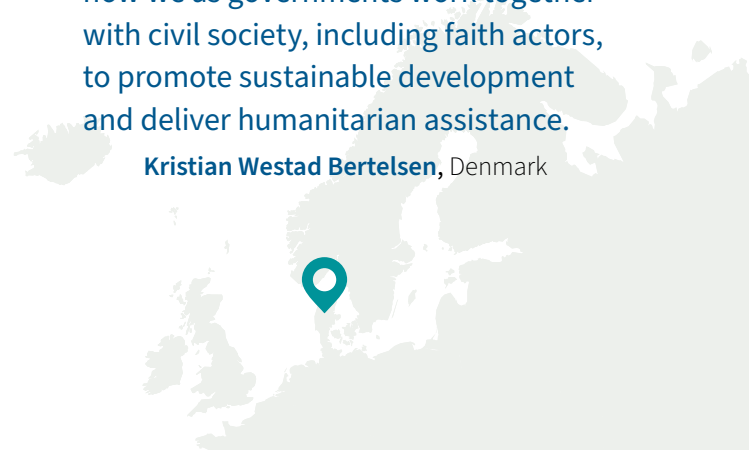
PaRD exemplifies the power of inclusivity, multistakeholder cooperation, and collective action when striving for positive change and sustainable development, as Kristian Westad Bertelsen, a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, discovered.

When it comes to development cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA) has a long-standing history of working with civil society organisations (CSOs), including faith-based organisations (FBOs). After PaRD was founded in 2016, the MFA and their partners from civil society immediately recognised its added value. PaRD enabled them to broaden their network and gain access to faith actors well beyond their existing cooperation with Danish FBOs. Though PaRD's inception came before Kristian Westad Bertelsen's involvement, when he joined the Steering Board in 2021 as the Danish MFA's representative, he immediately understood the value of the partnership for his work. "PaRD provides input and feedback on how we as governments work together with civil society, including faith actors, to promote sustainable development and deliver humanitarian assistance. It was eye opening for me to be in contact with such a broad and global community of FBOs and academic institutions."

Bertelsen describes PaRD as a friendly and supportive environment, "where one is encouraged to speak up and share learnings and listen to new perspectives." He has been impressed by the atmosphere within PaRD, even among high-ranking members. "It is unusual in a network of this size to have such a friendly, welcoming, and collegial atmosphere," he notes, highlighting PaRD's inclusive and collaborative nature. "Being part of the steering board has allowed me to exchange experiences

“ PaRD provides input and feedback on how we as governments work together with civil society, including faith actors, to promote sustainable development and deliver humanitarian assistance.

Kristian Westad Bertelsen, Denmark





In 2021, Kristian Westad Bertelsen (second from the left) participated in the delegation attending the Steering Board and Strategic Planning Board Meeting of PaRD in Berlin, Germany.

with leading experts in the field, which has benefited my work at home”.

In 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark hosted PaRD’s General Assembly of Members and Annual Forum alongside the PaRD members Danmission and DanChurchAid. At the Annual Forum, Bertelsen says, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark was able to promote and contribute to the inclusive approach of PaRD. Bertelsen admires how the Annual Forum has given different actors a public stage and brought their contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to an international level. One example is the study co-commissioned by DanChurchAid: “Religion and gender in donor policies and practice – A reflection on government ministry and intergovernmental agency engagement with religious actors in pursuit of SDG 5.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark appreciates that this and other important studies related to the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Member type Government

PaRD member Since 2017

Further information <https://um.dk/en>

“ It is unusual in a global network of this size to have such a friendly, welcoming, and collegial atmosphere.

role of religion in development work and humanitarian assistance are disseminated globally through the PaRD network.

Bertelsen also emphasises the active engagement of Danish civil society in PaRD’s Workstreams, such as Danmission’s participation in the Sustaining Peace Workstream and DanChurchAid’s role in the Gender Equality and Empowerment Workstream. “I interact with these organisations on a regular basis,” he says. “Together we engage with the PaRD network at different levels and are able to share the inputs we receive with each other and other partners at home.”

Bertelsen encourages other organisations who are engaged in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance to join PaRD. Being a member of PaRD, organisations can “play an active role in shaping how we assist and engage with those most affected by conflicts and climate change.” The Annual Forum, he notes, is a great opportunity to meet other actors who are actively working to foster sustainable change. “I have met very experienced and skilled people who work at the international and local level on the pressing issues of our time. I have often had inspiring and solution-oriented conversations with PaRD members – and to me, this is what PaRD is about.”



Mejindarpal Kaur
UNITED SIKHS

Freedom of Religion and Belief Allows Everyone a Future in Dignity

Mejindarpal Kaur's journey with PaRD amplifies the power of persistence and collaboration. As a human rights activist fighting for Freedom of Religion and Belief to be upheld and International Legal Director at United Sikhs, Kaur's voluntary endeavours have led to significant impacts. Through PaRD, she found a new path to extend the reach of local initiatives to a global level.

Mejindarpal Kaur's journey to becoming one of the Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) Workstream Leads at PaRD is deeply rooted in her longstanding commitment to human rights. When in 2004, well before the partnership came into existence, France passed a law banning religious symbols in public schools, Kaur's activism reached new heights. Although this discriminatory legal decision's focus took aim at Muslim dress codes, it also affected Sikhs who, as part of their spiritual and wisdom-oriented way of life, cover their uncut hair in a turban. The hair covering expresses humility, dignity, and respect for the divine and nature. It is an integral part of Sikhi. The French lawmakers' lack of religious literacy regarding Sikhi, one of the youngest world religions, sparked Kaur to advocate for a rethink of the ban and pursue a stronger legal commitment to the Freedom of Religion and Belief. She collaborated with fellow activists to pursue justice and equal rights for everyone affected by the law, regardless of the background or religious affiliation.

After nine years of relentless efforts, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that France's ban on religious symbols violated students' right to manifest their identity, as protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). "This marked a significant success,

“ Through PaRD, it becomes possible to extend the reach of local initiatives, magnifying their impact and enabling global collaboration. We need more locally based justice and mediation systems as many regions in the world are leaving the path of human rights and instead use totalitarian and inhuman strategies to intimidate and exploit their own citizens.

Mejindarpal Kaur, England / India / Malaysia





Mejindarpal Kaur at PaRD's Annual Forum in Cape Town, South Africa in 2021

highlighting the necessity and relevance to persistently stand up for human rights and FoRB,” Kaur recalls. Despite this ruling, the French government has not amended their legislation to date. The work continues.

Kaur had been active in her advocacy for some time when she first learned about PaRD in 2017. The partnership was still in its nascent stages when she was approached by Khushwant Singh, the current PaRD Head of Secretariat. “He was collecting good practices from faith organisations in the field of sustainable development and humanitarian assistance on behalf of the German government,” she says. Reconnecting with him in 2021, she recognised the need to become active in the partnership and she began advocating for FoRB issues — with success. By the end of the year, PaRD had established a Taskforce on FoRB, which has since been transformed into a Workstream. Now elected to the Steering Board, Kaur has been actively engaged in PaRD, attending the Annual Forums on Religion and Sustainable Development in 2021

UNITED SIKHS

Member type Faith-based organisation

PaRD member Since 2021

Further information <https://unitedsikhs.org> & www.sikhi.eu

“As Sikhs, we recognise all humans as part of one spiritual family. We strive for equal dignity, respect, justice, and harmony. We don’t do missionary work. We want to strengthen collaboration with all those who share these values.

and 2022. There, Kaur forged new connections and was able to learn with and from other members. “Sharing my experiences as a human rights lawyer and getting to know how other organisations work at international level led me to reassess our approaches in advocating for FoRB,” says Kaur.

The global platform also came in handy in 2023, when UNITED SIKHS was approached by a local Sikh community in England facing appropriation and misrepresentation through a missionary organisation. Kaur, using her newfound knowledge obtained through PaRD, wanted to find a way to “resolve the issue before resorting to legal action,” in her own words. While the local Sikh community worked locally, Kaur approached the matter at a global scale, seeking support from well-connected Leads of the FoRB Workstream: “I am grateful that my PaRD colleagues helped me connect with the missionary organisation and we are on our way to agreeing a resolution. As Sikhs, we recognise all humans as part of one spiritual family. We don’t do missionary work. We strive for equal dignity, respect, justice, and harmony. We want to strengthen collaboration with all those who share these values and want to help preventing disturbing situations from recurring in the future.”

That experience has solidified Kaur’s belief in the partnership’s great potential. “Through PaRD, it has become possible to extend the reach of local initiatives, magnifying their impact and enabling global collaboration. I hope that we can diversify PaRD’s funding to ensure its sustainability so that we may jointly develop more local justice and mediation systems. This is needed more than ever as many regions in the world are leaving the path of human rights and instead use totalitarian and inhuman strategies to intimidate and exploit their own citizens and neighbours.”



Professor Katherine Marshall
World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD)

Fostering Global Solutions through a Network of Networks

Explore the synergy between religion and sustainable development with Professor Katherine Marshall, Executive Director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) and senior fellow at Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University. She reflects on PaRD's distinctive ability to harness the collective resources of faith organisations and the wisdom of spirituality to overcome the global challenges facing humanity.

As the world is currently facing numerous norm-shifting challenges, Katherine Marshall is grateful for the role that PaRD plays in bringing diverse partnerships together. "With the multiple challenges of our time, from climate change to social inequality, multi-stakeholder partnerships emerge as vital nexuses where diverse actors converge. They are instrumental in bridging divides and fostering cooperation among actors who otherwise would not collaborate in a coordinated manner in a multipolar, fragmented yet global world," says Marshall.

"During the nascent years of PaRD, I actively engaged in envisioning the fundamental requisites and potential contributions of this distinct partnership," Marshall recalls. Using her broad experience as one of the leading experts in the field of religion and sustainable development, she argues that the challenge persists today. "Although religious actors contribute in many ways, for instance in the health and education sectors but also in humanitarian aid, the collective resources of

faith organisations and wisdom of humanity's spiritual traditions to address the pressing issues of our era are too often neglected."

“ A promising vision for this partnership is to evolve into a comprehensive network of networks. PaRD assembles a diverse array of actors on a long-term basis, weaving a unique tapestry of discussions that significantly enrich the broader development and international cooperation landscape.

Professor Katherine Marshall, USA



Katherine Marshall (second from right) with the National Chief Imam of Ghana, His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Osman Nuhu Sharubutu (fourth from right)

Measuring the impact of partnerships like PaRD is not easy, as it transcends individual actions. “The very fact that partners from very diverse backgrounds work with governments and multilaterals and academia in a structured dialogue is an achievement on its own,” notes Marshall. “The positive impact of PaRD may not always be immediately discernible, but it undoubtedly shapes the broader narrative and helps members expand their horizons and learn new and inclusive approaches. In part through its Workstreams, PaRD assembles a diverse array of actors, weaving a unique tapestry of discussions that significantly enrich the broader development and international cooperation landscape.”

Marshall, who was instrumental in putting the discourse on religion and development on the agenda of the World Bank and academia, has provided invaluable insights not only during the phase of establishing PaRD but also through her active involvement in PaRD’s Workstreams, particularly the Water, Environment and Climate Action Workstream (WECARE) and the Health Workstream.

World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD)

Member type	Academia
PaRD member	Since 2017
Further information	https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/wfdd

“PaRD’s Annual Forum can spark enriching encounters and dynamic dialogues, bridging diverse perspectives and harnessing religion’s positive power for sustainable development.”

“While we’ve made substantial progress, it’s evident that hurdles remain. In an increasingly secular world, it’s challenging to secure funding for PaRD and its Secretariat on a long-term basis.”

Marshall underscores the imperative need for PaRD to strengthen its connections with other networks. “A promising vision for this partnership is to evolve into a comprehensive network of networks,” she elaborates. Embracing collaborative alliances while avoiding duplications can amplify PaRD’s influence in global discourse – a pivotal element in advancing its overarching mission. Marshall emphasises that PaRD’s journey is a collective endeavour that gains strength through collaboration.

As Marshall asserts, PaRD undoubtedly possesses this potential, especially when experiencing its Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development. “My most enriching experiences within PaRD have arisen from the encounters and practical discussions that transpire at this annual event, where members and partners meet.” Her sentiments underscore the partnership’s distinctive ability to foster dynamic dialogues that bridge diverse perspectives, ultimately harnessing the positive power of religion to drive sustainable development.



Dr Iyad Abu Moghli
Faith for Earth Initiative,
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

To Protect Nature, We Need Alliances that Bridge the Gap Between Secular and Faith Actors

The WE CARE Workstream now stands as an indispensable cornerstone of PaRD. Learn why Dr Iyad Abu Moghli, founder of the Faith for Earth Initiative within the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), created the Workstream and worked to make the topic of environmental protection a priority area for the partnership. Through PaRD, he helped to bridge and connect faith actors with seemingly unapproachable allies and fostered unprecedented collaboration.

Religious and faith communities play a significant role in advocating for environmental protection, climate action, and sustainability. “However, their contributions are often overlooked, along with the fact that they foster values which are needed to respect nature,” says Iyad Abu Moghli. Seeking to change this narrative, Abu Moghli founded the Faith for Earth Initiative within the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2017. His ambitions did not stop there – he also became an advocate within PaRD for the prioritisation of environmental topics. The warm reception of his advocacy exemplifies PaRD’s dynamic nature. The partnership thrives through active member involvement, fostering collaborative efforts and driving meaningful transformations.

The spark that ignited Abu Moghli’s PaRD journey occurred when he encountered the partnership at an event in Amman in 2018. “I was impressed by PaRD’s potential in introducing the significant role of religious actors in

sustainable development,” he recalls. Yet he was taken aback to discover that while PaRD’s Workstreams focused on Health, Gender Equality and Empowerment, and Sustaining Peace, there was none specifically addressing the environment. “If one bears the words sustainable development in your title, then environmental issues must be at the forefront of the agenda.”

“When engaging on environmental and climate in PaRD, I received support from people, including those from secular contexts, that I honestly thought were untouchable before. But through PaRD, we met at eye-level.

Dr Iyad Abu Moghli, Kenya



A new sort of tent revival as faith actors meet in Nairobi for the Uniting Religions conference as part of the 2019 UNEA 4.

He urged PaRD to recognise this and admits that at first, he faced some resistance. “Back then, not many faith organisations were actively prioritising climate action, even though it was undoubtedly within their repertoire, especially through narratives centering around care for mother earth,” he admits. His passionate advocacy bore fruit, and the Water, Environment, and Climate Action Workstream (WECARE) had its inception the following year. “I connected with countless enthusiastic and passionate individuals. In no time, nearly 100 organisations had joined forces,” reflects Abu Moghli, still amazed at the alliances formed and the support that he and his colleagues received, including from high-ranking representatives from prominent faith organisations. “I had backing from people, including those from secular contexts, that I honestly thought were untouchable before. But through PaRD, we met at eye-level.” His experiences within the partnership encouraged him to strengthen his approach towards global, regional, and local networking.

“PaRD brings civil society, governments, multilaterals and academia to one table. This alliance bridges perspectives, aligns interests, and acts as a potent catalyst for united action towards a more sustainable future.”

In the interim, Abu Moghli has passed on the lead of the WECARE Workstream, placing it in the capable hands of colleagues. But he remains grateful for the numerous projects and conferences they were able to drive forward. “UNEP still is very active within the framework of PaRD,” Abu Moghli says. “And PaRD continues to be an unwavering partner, as exemplified by our current collaboration on the first ever Faith Pavilion at a UN Climate Conference.” The Faith Pavilion, a taskforce jointly comprised of UNEP, PaRD, the COP Presidency, and other partners, aims to empower faith-based organisations at the upcoming COP28 in 2023 and make their voices heard by the global audience of decision-makers. “PaRD brings civil society, governments, multilaterals, and academia to one table,” Abu Moghli emphasises. “This alliance bridges perspectives, aligns interests, and acts as a potent catalyst for united action towards a more sustainable future.”

Faith for Earth Initiative, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Member type Multilateral

PaRD member Since 2018

Further information <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative>



Mercy Munene

Catholic Youth Network for Environmental
Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)

Empowering Young People to Advocate for Sustainable Change

As youth make up nearly half of the global population, empowering the next generation is crucial in shaping a good future and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mercy Munene, a young climate activist from Kenya and a member of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), has discovered in PaRD a global platform that gives her the opportunity to amplify her voice as a young African woman. For her, PaRD is becoming a driving force for collaboration across ages, regions, and religions.

Mercy Munene has been a passionate environmental enthusiast for much of her life, thanks to her family. As part of CYNESA, a platform for young faith actors in Africa which promotes responsible stewardship of the environment, she took part in the 4th session of the UN Environment Assembly. There, she heard a colleague speak about PaRD, a partnership whose mission she connected with. Though she had not crossed paths with PaRD before, her curiosity was instantly piqued.

“I was excited to learn that PaRD helps elevate organisations – even small ones like CYNESA – to an international level where different key actors converge to influence policies,” Munene recalls. “As a young woman from Kenya, this was a unique opportunity to connect our faith-inspired local work with international actors. I had always dreamed of a chance to sit at a table with governments, academia, and other faith organisations working from around the globe.”

As she discovered more about PaRD’s programme, Munene says she felt a deep connection to its WE CARE Workstream, which focuses on advocating for environmental and climate protection within the framework of faith. “As someone with a strong family background rooted in faith as well as climate activism, I felt deeply connected to this cause.”

“For me as a young woman from Africa, it is key to connect the local with the global through a global partnership like PaRD.

Mercy Munene, Kenya





CYNESA works to bridge global advocacy and grassroots engagement, both metaphorically and literally as this tree-planting by their Kenyan chapter show. In partnership with PaRD, CYNESA has been amplifying African youth voices on the international stage.

Munene has discovered that her involvement in PaRD, especially since becoming a Steering Board member in 2021, has provided a valuable chance to connect with highly experienced professionals globally. This international exposure allowed her to actively participate in crucial international events and share her concerns and ideas. For Munene, “PaRD is not just a network of organisations, it’s a community of real people who support and listen to each other and work toward the common good of all the people.”

Munene appreciates more than just the networking opportunities. PaRD is a source for real inspiration, partnership, and capacity-building. “During the Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development in 2022 in Indonesia, I first heard about the intersection of climate change and mental health,” she recollects. “This was truly inspirational, and now together with a friend I’m working on a paper which looks at this nexus through the lens of faith.”

“ PaRD is not just a network of faith organisations, governments, multilateral entities, and academia, it’s a community of real people who support and listen to each other at eye level.

Based on her work in PaRD, Munene was asked to give the opening remarks and contribute to the closing session where youth actors offered recommendations for the next steps at the PaRD Annual Forum in Indonesia. Soon after, she was recommended as a panellist for a climate event organised by the Svenska Missionsrådet. “That gave me a chance to represent African perspectives and amplify the voices of young activists in regions directly affected by climate change,” she explains. “It’s crucial to give young people the confidence to be active and raise their voices without neglecting their faith.”

Being a part of PaRD has given Munene a great opportunity to co-shape a global partnership that is working to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, like the elimination of poverty and reducing inequalities. Goals that align neatly with the aims of faith.

Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)

Member type	Faith-based organisation
PaRD member	Since 2016
Further information	www.cynesa.org



Fred Nyabera
Arigatou International

Advancing Inclusivity in an Evolving Global Landscape

Fred Nyabera, Director of the End Child Poverty initiative at Arigatou International, is committed to driving change by dismantling barriers, respecting local contexts, and promoting inclusivity. Nyabera favours multifaith cooperation and education to amplify children's rights, envisioning a future where collaborations within PaRD, with its distinctive model and intergenerational dialogues, inspire the needed transformation.

For Fred Nyabera, PaRD represents the transformative power of aligning faith, collaboration, and sustainable development. As the Director of the End Child Poverty initiative at Arigatou International, a global organisation established in Japan to create a better world for children, Nyabera is dedicated to improving children's well-being through initiatives like the SDGs Academy for Children by Arigatou International. Collaborating beyond religious and geographical boundaries is essential to his mission.

Nyabera's commitment to children led him to join PaRD's Steering Board in 2021, marking a pivotal moment in his involvement. In his new role, he personally experienced the profound impact of collaboration and collegiality. He recognised the core values of consultation, collaboration, and consensus-building that define PaRD's distinctive culture. "It's a genuine partnership," he affirms. "We navigate challenges and celebrate successes together, embracing consensus-based decision-making. Our commitment to inclusivity remains unwavering, prioritising the overarching goal over individual interests. Importantly, key funders don't dictate our agenda; engaged leadership members shape it."

Nyabera emphasises that this spirit of inclusivity permeates everyday interactions. "Stefan Sengstmann from World Vision, one of the most experienced colleagues in this growing partnership, alongside the PaRD Secretariat, leads regular sessions for new members. This encourages inclusivity, mutual growth, and learning from the very beginning of a PaRD membership, creating a safe space for direct interaction with established members."

“Inclusivity lies at the core of our partnership. Prioritising our overarching goal over individual interests defines our unique approach. It's worth noting that key funders don't dictate our agenda; it's the engaged leadership members who guide us.

Fred Nyabera, Kenya



Arigatou International's SDGs Academy empowers young people and fosters values-based, interfaith collaboration for a just and sustainable world.

The commitment to inclusivity also extends to the regional and local levels, exemplified by the PaRD Voice of Africa initiative. Nyabera, based in Kenya, is actively involved in this group, which aims to contextualize global discourse within local contexts and vice versa. “PaRD’s potential to bridge the gap between the global and the local is promising,” he says. “Through the PaRD Voice of Africa, we ensure that our partnership remains relevant at the grassroots level. Empowering members in an increasingly multipolar world stems from the connection between the local and the global.”

Nyabera believes that PaRD addresses a fundamental challenge to global cooperation: dispelling the notion of mistrust between religious actors, governments, and academia. He underscores the significance of diverse representatives coming together in a world characterised by prejudice and fragmentation. “Fostering trust, empathy, respect, and inclusivity is more essential than ever.”

“The presence of individuals from religious, governmental, multilateral, and academic backgrounds at the same table, working together in a world marked by prejudice and fragmentation, is a remarkable achievement. Encouraging trust, empathy, respect, and inclusivity is more crucial than ever.”

Nyabera envisions PaRD as a catalyst for change that leaves no one behind and commends the progress it is making. “PaRD is becoming more diverse, incorporating diverse gender, age, and even children’s perspectives. Our partnership amplifies these voices, fostering a world where boundaries are transcended, potentials are nurtured, and no one is overlooked. This is a vision that deeply resonates with me.”

This vision aligns closely with Nyabera’s most cherished project, the SDGs Academy for Children by Arigatou International. This innovative initiative equips children from diverse backgrounds with the tools to spark positive change within their local communities. Nyabera emphasises: “PaRD’s collaborative ethos profoundly influenced this academy, which thrives on intergenerational dialogue, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas that empower young minds to embrace the interconnectedness and relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Arigatou International

Member type	Civil society organisation
PaRD member	Since 2016
Further information	https://arigatouinternational.org



Peter Prove
World Council of Churches

Transforming Encounters into Long-term Collaboration to Tackle the Challenges the World Faces

PaRD's inclusive platform brings diverse partners to the table. These encounters enable even those with longstanding involvement in promoting sustainable development, such as the director of the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), Peter Prove, to develop initiatives that thrive because of this unique collaborative space.

Since its inception in 2016, PaRD has brought together diverse organisations and individuals, each contributing to a collective vision of a sustainable future. Among them: Peter Prove, a key supporter who has been with this global partnership from the outset. "I first came into contact with PaRD when it was still an idea," recalls Prove. Introduced by a colleague, he was intrigued by PaRD, which he saw as an opportunity to galvanise multi-sectoral collaborations among governments, intergovernmental organisations, faith-based and other civil society organisations for accelerated progress for sustainable development. As WCC's own engagement with a range of intergovernmental and governmental partners grew, the need for a unifying platform to help coordinate networks in an efficient way became evident. "PaRD stood out as an opportunity to bring all these various relationships to one table," Prove states.

Through the encounters and exchanges it convenes, PaRD has enabled members to develop important collaborations on a variety of topics, including environmental protection, peace, and health. "Working towards common goals within the framework of PaRD has transformed sporadic contacts into familiar partnerships and created long-lasting cooperations," Prove emphasises.

“Working towards common goals within the framework of PaRD transformed sporadic contacts into familiar partnerships and created long-lasting cooperations.

Peter Prove, Switzerland





Peter Prove during an interfaith exchange at the oldest mosque in South Africa at the side lines of the Annual Forum in Cape Town, South Africa in 2021

One example is WCC's collaboration with the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) on a milestone project targeting food security in Nigeria. The initiative's inclusive approach unites state ministries, religious representatives, tribal associations, academia, and the media. It highlights the essential role of religious leaders in safeguarding the environment, ensuring food security, and fostering peace while collectively addressing challenges related to conflicts, climate change, and food security. This opportunity would not have emerged without PaRD providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Looking back, Prove, who has represented WCC on PaRD's Steering Board since 2016 and is one of the Co-Chairs, recognises the progress the partnership has made despite the challenges inherent in promoting partnership in a multipolar world where political agendas and priorities change so rapidly. "We're making steady progress but to further multi-sectoral collaboration for sustainable development, we need more governments and multi-lateral entities to join our partnership and benefit from the diverse expertise and networks the members bring

“To further multi-sectoral collaboration for sustainable development, we need more governments and multilaterals to join our partnership and benefit from the diverse expertise and networks the members bring along.”

along,” Prove admits. “But I’m optimistic, especially with our success in welcoming the Indonesian government as PaRD’s first governmental member from the Global South in 2023.”

While assembling the right team in the Steering Board and at the Secretariat is crucial, there is more to the equation, as Prove underlines. Shifting the focus from symbolic to tangible action is imperative. As implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the targets of the Paris Climate Agreement is way off target, Prove urges accelerated action, and envisions PaRD as a key instrument for this purpose: “By harnessing the diversity, resources, and networks, we can tackle the intricate, interwoven challenges confronting our multipolar and globalised world today, nurturing sustainable development, social equity, and global advancement.” PaRD’s significance goes beyond assembling pertinent stakeholders, Prove argues, saying: “Moving from talking to action means to truly embody SDG 17, bringing global partnerships for sustainable development to life.”

World Council of Churches (WCC)

Member type	Faith-based organisation
PaRD member	Since 2016
Further information	https://www.oikoumene.org/



Frank Schwabe

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation
and Development (BMZ)

Human Rights Like Freedom of Religion or Belief, Go Hand in Hand with Sustainable Development

For Frank Schwabe, the German Federal Government Commissioner for Freedom of Religion or Belief, religious communities and faith-based organisations are key advocates for human rights and important players in the fight against injustice and poverty. He has been observing religious actors for many years as one of the strongest pillars in civil society engaging with peace, equality, dignity, and human rights.

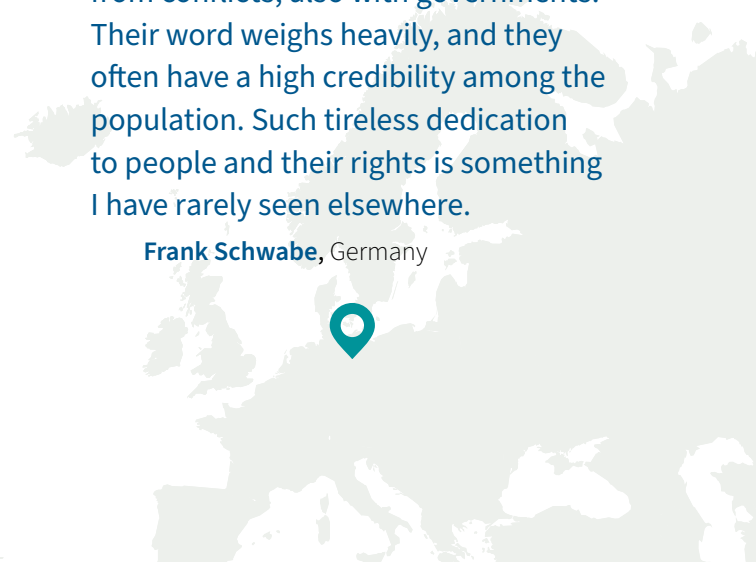
“In quite a few regions of the world, state structures are too weak to reliably take over the safeguarding of public services,” says Frank Schwabe. The Commissioner has been a German parliamentarian for 18 years, and was responsible for climate policy for a long time. He is considered one of the most experienced human rights experts in political Berlin. “On top of this, there can sometimes be a great deal of scepticism towards international development and aid organisations among the local population.”

Schwabe, who is also a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that religion may play a key role in sustainable development. He has been maintaining close contacts with Latin America for many years and holds exchanges with cardinals and bishops, including with dignitaries in Guatemala and El Salvador and with Muslim leaders and scholars in Nigeria and Iraq.

“From my visits to Africa and Latin America, I can say that in many cases faith organisations, religious actors and dignitaries fill important gaps in education, health but also support tirelessly in humanitarian crises.”

“Religious actors do not shy away from conflicts, also with governments. Their word weighs heavily, and they often have a high credibility among the population. Such tireless dedication to people and their rights is something I have rarely seen elsewhere.

Frank Schwabe, Germany





Frank Schwabe in conversation with Syrian Orthodox leaders in monastery Mor Mattai, in Northern Iraq.

In the course of his work, Frank Schwabe has met many religious representatives who are human rights defenders in the best sense of the word. Along with many volunteers, these leaders stand up for the rights of marginalised and vulnerable people like refugees. They make sure that the environment and drinking water are protected, and they provide education to children in low-income families. But they also engage in peace, mediation and reconciliation work and provide spiritual care in times of crises. “Religious actors do not shy away from conflicts, also with governments. Their word weighs heavily, and they often have a high credibility among the population. Such tireless dedication to people and their rights is something I have rarely seen elsewhere,” Schwabe admits.

“All these positive contributions of religion and religious and spiritual actors are often overlooked in secular contexts, including in Germany,” Schwabe analyses. One reason seems to be that the social structures and services

“ I see it as my job to protect the rights of religious actors and communities, ensure that they can speak out and harness their potentials, locally, regionally, and globally through partnerships like PaRD. I hope that other governments, especially from the Global South, will join this vital partnership.

of churches are taken for granted in Germany. At the same time, institutionalised religion is losing its importance in Europe; Christian denominations have been losing members in recent years.

“This is precisely why the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) decided to place greater emphasis on the connection between religion and sustainable development. BMZ realised the need to raise awareness about the manifold positive impacts of religious actors when it comes to humanitarian crises and sustainable development and the added value of a long-term collaboration between them and governments,” Schwabe says. He explains that PaRD, the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, was established in 2016 to create a global partnership that taps into the positive potential of religious actors on a long-term basis “Since then, PaRD facilitates a systematic exchange between governments, multilaterals, academia, religious and other civil society actors and highlights positive contributions to the SDGs at a global level.”

From his work, Schwabe knows that “especially highly engaged religious actors need protection and support. It is not uncommon to see attempts of intimidation, mental and physical attacks, or unlawful arrests, especially if they raise their voice against governments and human rights abuses.” In many parts of the world, religious actors and organisations are under surveillance and pressure as a key pillar of civil society. Like many others, they have experienced shrinking spaces in their work and in civil society in general. “I see it as my job to protect the rights of religious actors and communities, ensure that they can speak out and harness their potentials, locally, regionally, and globally through partnerships like PaRD. I hope that other governments, especially from the Global South, will join this vital partnership,” emphasises Schwab.

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Member type	Government
PaRD member	Since 2016
Further information	www.bmz.de

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