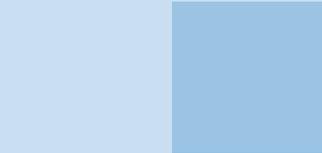
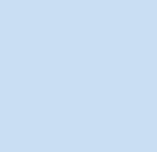
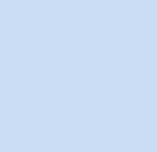
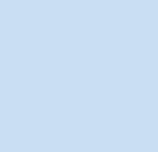
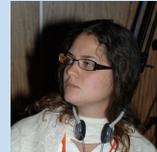
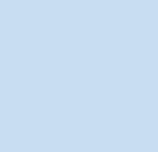
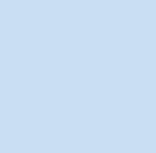




Global Forum of Faith-based Organisations for Population and Development



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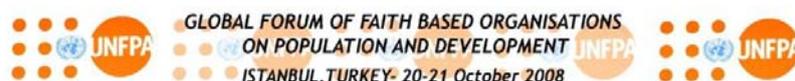
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
I - THE ROAD TO ISTANBUL.....	12
II - RELIGIOUS LEADERS' COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIP	17
III – Panel I: HIV and AIDS, AND MATERNAL HEALTH	26
IV – Panel II: YOUTH AND MIGRATION	32
V – Panel III: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT	37
VI – Panel IV: EMERGENCIES AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS	44
VII – Panel V: COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES OF UNITED NATIONS ENGAGEMENT WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS	50
VIII – Panel VI: SHARING GLOBAL CONSENSUS ON INTERFAITH NETWORKING WITH UNFPA. 55	
IX - THE ROAD FROM ISTANBUL: EXCERPTS FROM THE CLOSING STATEMENT BY UNFPA’S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	61
X - BLESSING OF THE CONSENSUS BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS.....	65
XI – CONCLUDING NOTES	69
XII - GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	76
XIII - REFERENCES	78
ANNEX I – FULL SPEECHES OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....	81
ANNEX II - GLOBAL FORUM AGENDA.....	91
ANNEX III - UNFPA Guidelines for Engaging FBOs as Agents of Change	98
ANNEX IV - QUOTES.....	105
ANNEX V - PHOTOGRAPHS	108

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Background

In the lead up to this historic gathering of the faith-based organizations mobilized around the ICPD Programme of Action, UNFPA hosted four regional fora on FBO engagement. The regional fora took place in Durban, South Africa (December 2007), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (May 2008), Cairo, Egypt (July 2008), and Buenos Aires, Argentina (September 2008).

The theme of each regional forum was built on the issues around which a legacy of partnership with FBOs evolved in the different regions. FBO participants were selected from among existing and potential partners of country and regional offices. In each forum, discussions focused on lessons learned, and successful partnerships between UNFPA and FBOs on ICPD areas (family planning, violence against women, women's empowerment, HIV&AIDS, youth and migration). Outcomes of the deliberations included a series of recommendations to enhance partnerships (see attached).

The Global Forum

On the 20th of October 2008 over 160 religious leaders, faith-based organizations and United Nations representatives¹ spanning the globe gathered in Istanbul, Turkey, to establish an Inter-faith Network for Population and Development. The Forum featured 60 representatives of UNFPA and other United Nations bodies, as well as over 100 representatives of faith-based organizations (FBOs) from five regions (Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean). In addition to the regional faith-based representatives, the Forum hosted religious leaders, and resource people, including representation from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), who have made UNFPA's Culture work possible since 2002.

¹UNESCO, WHO, ILO, UN-Habitat, UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNDP, and UNICEF

As noted by UNFPA Executive Director, Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, discussions at the Global Forum revealed overlap and similitude of language used by UNFPA and faith-based representatives. Together, faith-based representatives and the United Nations increasingly speak of the “right to human dignity”. The Executive Director stressed that “this is an important development, as it shows a greater understanding of each other’s worldviews”.

Highlights from opening addresses

Mr. Mahmood Ayub, UN Resident Coordinator, Turkey, affirmed that the Global Forum was “about political action, empowering women, reducing HIV and AIDS, violence against women, and human rights.”

Ms. Safiye Cagar, Director of UNFPA Information and External Relations Division (IERD), stated that “UNFPA has a record of sustaining partnerships with FBOs, by providing technical, logistical, and financial support”. UNFPA can play the role of facilitator by bringing years of experience in building partnerships with parliamentarians and youth networks. Ms. Cagar went on to say that networks bring many benefits, including knowledge sharing and enabling South-South partnerships.

Ms. Obaid noted: “I firmly believe that partnerships are the only way forward if our ideals of human rights are to become living realities for every man and woman, young and old, and this network can help further our common goals. Sustainable social change must be deep-rooted in communities, and while UNFPA and FBOs have different mandates and different means, we can work together towards common objectives.”

Mustafa Cagrici, Deputy President of Religious Affairs, reminded participants of the value in using religious texts to promote and defend fundamental human rights. He reiterated the multiple references in the Qur’an, the Holy Book of Islam, to the equal rights of all human beings, and the obligation to protect them.

The opening address was followed with the first part of a two-part video developed by IERD, in close consultation with the Technical Division. The two videos are entitled “The Power of Faith”, and “How to Reach Common Ground”.

The opening ceremony included a session led by religious leaders, in which representatives from different faith traditions made statements of commitment to UNFPA-FBO partnerships. The following quotes are excerpts from their statements.

“When the essence of religion and spirituality are universal human values, it is vital that we drop our miniscule identities, join hands and take bigger responsibilities to make this world free of disease, stress and social evils.”

Mr. Anish Dua, On Behalf of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, India

“I would like to emphasize that it is in our duty as faith-based organizations and religious figures to take action in cooperation with UNFPA and many other organizations.”

Ven. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, Thailand

“In the 21st century, to be religious is to be inter-religious.”

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, United Kingdom

“We should no longer stay silent, and should walk, hand in hand.”

Mr. Elias Szczynicki, Peru

“Globalization of poverty, HIV and AIDS, family violence, and racial discrimination are not localized problems – they are global. We have to have interfaith cooperation to bring ethics to the forefront.”

Imam Sheikh Hassan Ezzeddine Ali Bahr al Uloom, Iraq

“We recognize the participation of our sisters, but yet they are the object of violence and discrimination.”

Rev. Julio E. Murray, Panama

The Global Forum hosted five thematic panels designed to facilitate the sharing of experiences of FBOs in tackling challenges in population and development, as well as their success stories.

The first day of the Forum hosted panels on “HIV and AIDS and Maternal Health”; and “Youth and Migration”. FBOs from different religious traditions and representing the five regions (Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin

America and the Caribbean) presented respective activities and initiatives on ICPD areas, much of which was done in partnership with UNFPA. Each presentation addressed ongoing challenges, successes, and provided recommendations to enhance the Interfaith Network.

Highlights from day one -- The Power of Faith

- All agreed on the role of FBOs in fostering effective change and transformation in local communities, including the part they can play in the development of government policies;
- FBOs are strategically placed on the ground to nurture and enrich human life, especially in the context of globalization and in the face of contemporary global challenges such as HIV and AIDS, the global financial crisis, the food crisis, and the rising cost of living;
- This is a period of interdependence wherein FBOs and UNFPA need to work together for social transformation;
- There are values and beliefs in all faiths traditions that provide the foundation for a set of common fundamental rights, including the right to physical and mental health;
- All faiths have shared visions and common denominators in human dignity and human rights;
- There is a need for national and regional interfaith alliances to support a *global* interfaith alliance, and vice versa, to strengthen on-going FBO efforts on ICPD areas;
- In all regions of the world, FBOs continue to serve as community centers - they are respected in society, and seen as co-leaders along with the elected political leaders. In this respect FBO actions are significant in influencing local norms;
- This is a moment when many FBOs are reaching out to the international development community in a call for partnership.



Press Conference L-R: Interpreter, Sheikh Tayseer Tamini, Rev. Pax Tan, Sheikh Shaaban Mubaje, Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Sirster Ngozi Uti, Interpreter.

How to Reach Common Ground

- UNFPA should respond to the knowledge and capacity building needs expressed by FBOs, including support for development of evidence based advocacy, comparative practice, for example methodologies on including reproductive health in school curricula, etc;
- UNFPA should support the documentation of evidence-based resources that measure impact of how FBO engagement has improved the lives of people, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups such as migrants, IDPs/refugees, youth/adolescents;
- UNFPA should continue to examine existing initiatives which have brought together diverse faith communities to inspire future interfaith and secular collaboration;
- Many Forum participants expressed the need for a consolidated database that allows FBOs to learn from each other's experiences. UNFPA pointed to 'Culture Matters II' as a living document which provides a comprehensive overview of FBO activity on ICPD areas around the world.;
- An Interfaith Network can constitute a safe space, a "sacred space", where challenges can be raised by different faith traditions, based on the everyday experiences of FBOs as they attempt to enhance service-delivery; or issues that are being interpreted differently within the same faith;
- The Interfaith Network should work with UNFPA to advocate for implementation of international legal standards, including the protection of migrants;
- The Interfaith Network should actively target and work with youth and adolescents.

"No one can claim that domestic violence is a private issue. It is a public health issue. That is why the Church must be involved in combating it."

Rev. Blanca Armand Pilon, Uruguay

Four panels took place on day two of the Forum. The first covered the issue of "Violence against Women and Women's Empowerment". Many Forum participants emphasized the need to view violence against women as a human security issue. FBO representatives agreed on the urgent

need to foster the social and economic empowerment of women. Participants concurred that this would necessitate partnering with men and boys, including the provision of gender-sensitive training.

FBO representatives also pointed to the ongoing need for amendments to national legislation on women's status, and to tackle trafficking of women in the global sex trade. FBO representatives concurred on the need to emphasize *prevention* of violence against women, which requires

"Through gender-justice programming, we have created transformative spaces, safe spaces, grace spaces... Women have moved from being bearers of stereotypes to bearers of human rights."

Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Latin America

integrated advocacy between FBOs, government, and the international development community to transform attitudes that perpetuate the phenomenon.

The second panel on day two addressed “Emergencies and Humanitarian Settings”. The discussion illustrated the critical role of FBOs in providing safe spaces for peace and reconciliation, as witnessed in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda. Other key issues included the need for an ongoing, transparent, and constructive dialogue between UNFPA and FBOs. A number of FBO representatives acknowledged UNFPA’s role in capacity-building and technical training of religious leaders on population and development, and urged for ongoing programme initiatives to provide faith communities with scientific, evidence-based research. Several stressed the importance that faith-based partners be treated as equal members of the development community, along with UNFPA’s more secular counterparts. Equal partnerships between UNFPA and FBOs allow the exchange of needs to be articulated clearly, thus enhancing the collaborative nature of the Interfaith Network on Population and Development.

The fifth session of the Forum hosted a special panel on “Comparative UN Experiences with FBOs, which looked at evolving relationships between FBOs and a number of United Nations agencies and bodies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNAIDS, WHO, DESA, and ILO). Concrete examples of how FBO partners have worked with United Nations agencies were shared, along with discussions around how a Global Interfaith Network could be instrumental in the deliverance of mandates of the respective agencies.

Of particular concern to the United Nations panel was the need for awareness-raising around the criminalization of HIV-infection. A critical point was made regarding the importance of developing a common language for use between United Nations bodies and FBOs, especially since faith-based communities do not form a homogenous entity. Additionally, panelists agreed on the central role of the media to combat stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS. Subsequently, FBOs and religious leaders agreed that a greater effort must be made to inform the media of its role in combating stigma in their local communities. In addition, Forum participants agreed that discrimination against HIV and AIDS can only be countered when effective legislation is made to work through the sensitization of community leaders.

“Enough is enough of giving speeches in the mosques and the churches. Religious leaders and FBOs now have to act collectively for the common good. This is the time for building an interfaith humanitarian network.”

Dr. Hany El-Banna, Humanitarian Forum

The final panel of the Global Forum was on “Sharing Consensus on Interfaith Networking with UNFPA”. Key points included the need for FBOs to partner with non-faith-based civil society organizations, and the need for FBOs to solidify approaches to population and development issues by working to resolve competition for resources within

their own communities. As Rev. Pax Tan of the Lutheran Church in Singapore and Malaysia noted, “there is a need to see more examples of partnering, so that we build and test the boundaries, take more risks, push each other, and say to one another, ‘come on we can do it’ ”.

Highlights from day two

- Violence against women is a violation of human dignity, and therefore, human rights. Violence against women knows no religious boundaries, and FBOs are critical to break the culture of silence and taboo around the issue;
- In addition to their role of responding to violence against women through service provision, FBOs should be supported in utilizing their unique positions as influential agents in area of prevention;
- FBOs should be involved in any needs assessment exercise carried out by international actors especially during emergencies and humanitarian situations, in addition to their role of delivering services. FBOs can be supported through specialized consultations for religious leaders on integrating responses to emergency situations, including the development of gender-sensitive approaches;
- UNFPA can build bridges between FBOs, media and other stakeholders to enhance awareness and generate opportunities for partnership. These could be explored through the creation of public awareness media campaigns on diverse subjects, such as violence against women, human trafficking, and HIV and AIDS;
- United Nations agencies should strengthen their ongoing, systematic, and collective efforts to support FBOs by facilitating knowledge-sharing and capacity-building;
- There is a strong need for country and regional engagement to make the Global Interfaith Network effective.

“The regional and global forums have enriched us in many ways, empowered us, given us greater impetus to cross over barriers which we thought was the end of the line. We need to see more examples so that we can build and test the boundaries. We hope that we will do it, we are already doing it - but now it is time to upscale and break barriers and use our faith to do this.”

Rev. Pax Tan, Malaysia

Closing comments by UNFPA Executive Director

The Executive Director of UNFPA summed up the main recommendations reached by the panelists and stated the organizations’ commitment to partnership on common objectives.

- Religious leaders and FBOs should always be part of the solution and not part of the problem- they play a pivotal role in bringing peace with justice, because all faiths believe in peace and always in justice;
- There is a the need for a safe space, virtual or real, where free discussions can take place on difficult issues, such as sexuality, so that we can move forward in supporting people looking for improved physical and mental health;

- Scientific-based evidence, information, research and technical support to build knowledge and capacity are needed to help FBOs support their constituencies, both in terms of the messages they deliver and the services they provide;
- There is widespread sentiment that to achieve concrete results and build bridges between religious leaders, political decision-makers and secular civil society organizations need to be engaged collectively and simultaneously;
- FBOs have a role to play in advocacy to promote the adoption of people-centered policies;
- Efforts should be inclusive and strategic so that work continues on two levels—with mainstream populations and also with vulnerable and marginalized populations;
- UNFPA will convene a similar conference in 2010 to assess progress in building the networks at all levels and the challenges that meet them, and to agree on a set of measures to meet these challenges.

Ms. Obaid ensured the participants that UNFPA will establish focal points for the networks in country and regional offices, to join the already existing focal point at Headquarters. She concluded by saying:

“The Network is yours. You build it and sustain it by your commitment. It is yours and we, at UNFPA, will be with you to support your efforts. It will live and grow by your faiths and your energies.”

In the conclusion of the Forum all participants committed to the establishment of a Global Interfaith Network formed upon a basic consensus (the Istanbul Consensus, below). The Global Interfaith Network will reinforce the mandate of the UNFPA to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

Istanbul Consensus on the Principles of a Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development

The gathered representatives of UNFPA and FBOs from around the world are committed collectively:

- To the principle that faiths share the same aims to safeguard the dignity and human rights of all people, women and men, young and old;
- To work together to advance human well-being and realize the rights of all individuals with attention to women and young people;
- To identify regional and national FBO focal points;
- To exchange experiences and learn from each other, through the Interfaith Network;
- To ensure that FBOs partners own the principles of the Network and maintain linkages with each other, with the support of UNFPA;
- To continue to maintain strong regional and national networks supported by UNFPA country offices, feeding into a Global Network facilitated by Headquarters, as a working modality to realize the ICPD mandate.

Launch of UNFPA publication on culturally sensitive approaches to population and development

The Global Forum provided an arena for the launch of UNFPA's latest publication on culturally-sensitive approaches to population and development. *"Culture Matters II: Lessons from a Legacy of Engaging Faith-based Organizations"* maps partnerships between UNFPA and faith-based organizations in the areas of population and development, including human rights, reproductive health, women's empowerment, adolescents and youth, humanitarian settings, and HIV and AIDS. The publication provides an analysis of best practices and lessons learned in faith-based partnerships around the world, and suggests key resources on faith-based engagement and organizations.

Launch of the UNFPA Online Global Directory of Faith-based Organizations in Population and Development

On Day two of the Forum, information was shared with the participants on how they can utilize an online database of FBO partners engaged in ICPD areas around the world. The Directory is available for members of the Interfaith Network at: <https://extranet.unfpa.org/Apps/FBO>, and for UNFPA staff at <http://www.myunfpa/Apps/FBO/>. The Directory provides the details of FBOs working on ICPD related areas, particularly reproductive health, gender equality, and population and development. Those same FBOs participated in the UNFPA regional forums on faith-based partnerships in ICPD areas, as well as the Global Forum on strengthening FBO partnerships.

I - THE ROAD TO ISTANBUL



From L-R: Ms. Safiye Cagar - UNFPA, Rabbi Isak Haleva - Turkey, Ms. Thoraya Obaid - UNFPA, Mr. Mustafa Cagirci – Turkey, and Mr. Mahmood A. Ayub – UN Resident Coordinator.

UNFPA's working definition of FBOs

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) are religious, faith-based, and/or faith-inspired groups, which operate as registered or unregistered non-profit institutions. UNFPA partners with human rights-oriented FBOs which are service deliverers in areas described by the ICPD Programme of Action.

We have to ask ourselves:

- *Is it moral to allow a woman to die every minute during childbirth when we know that can save her?*
- *Is it moral to extend the suffering of a woman who was raped and violated, to endure a life of shame and stigma?*
- *Is it moral to leave refugees and displaced persons, mostly women and their children, to an existence deprived of the basics of life because we do not see the special needs of women?*
- *Is it moral to forbid a girl to have the same chances in life as a boy simply because she was born a girl?*

As human beings, we share a common humanity. And yet for too many people today, the comprehensive package of knowledge, services, and support they need to change their conditions, to escape from poverty and enjoy a life of health and opportunity, remain beyond reach.

“Your religious communities have traditionally served as the oldest social service networks. You have moral authority and social and political outreach within your respective networks. You are able to employ these resources to improve human well-being and serve the purpose of the greater good.”

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director, Opening Statement, Istanbul – October 21, 2008.

Religious leaders and FBOs enjoy unique relationships with members of local communities – relationships often built on mutual respect, trust, and service to those most in need. In most countries throughout the world, it is religious leaders and FBOs who have the best access to resources in local settings, the largest access to the poorest and most disadvantaged communities, as well as social and moral capital to leverage for positive change and transformation. Through spiritual platforms, faith-based organisations and religious leaders can access community beliefs, and influence local norms. And with vast volunteer-networks, FBOs are well equipped to provide local people with services such as counseling, education and training, and practical and spiritual relief in humanitarian crises and emergencies.

Faith-based representatives are thus critically placed to address issues that go to the heart of human relations, such as women’s empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and occupy unique positions when it comes to the most sensitive social issues, such as family planning (FP). In fact, in a number of countries, the advocacy and backing of religious leaders has led the way for the introduction and implementation of ground-breaking programmes on family planning and reproductive health.

Partnerships with FBOs in a variety of development fields are happening throughout the United Nations. The UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki Moon, cited the significance of FBOs in his call for multi-stakeholder partnerships and alliances to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Other initiatives that call for interreligious and intercultural dialogue are now unfolding and intensifying at the UN and beyond, framed by a number of UN General Assembly resolutions. (61/221; 60/166; 60/160 among others²)

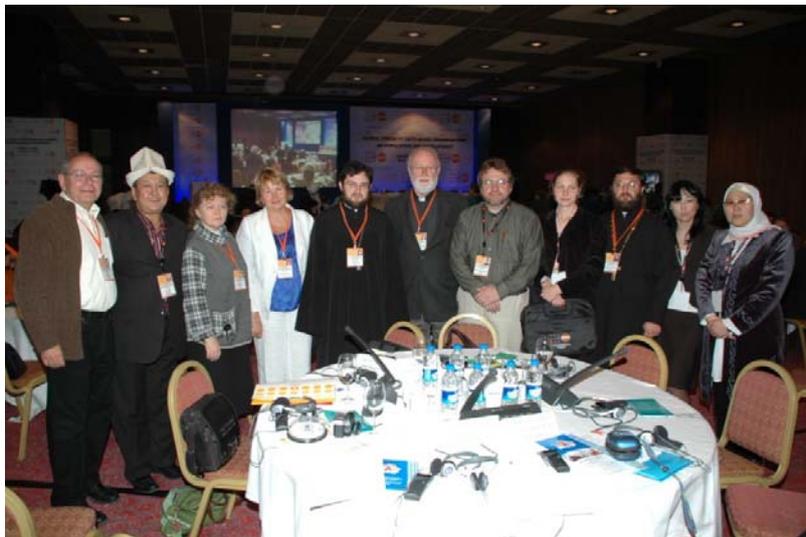
The social and moral capital held by religious leaders and FBOs places them alongside other actors at the local level that UNFPA refers to as ‘cultural agents of change’. Cultural agents of change work at the grassroots level – with the people, and for the people – to bring to life the standards of human dignity embedded in international frameworks such as the ICPD. UNFPA believes that faith-based actors are key to realizing the Fund’s mandate.

It is with this belief that UNFPA gathered FBO representatives and religious leaders from over 50 different countries around the world to discuss ways to move forward, in strategic partnerships, on the ICPD agenda. The Global Forum of FBOs, which took place in Istanbul on 20 and 21 October 2008, brought together over 100 representatives of faith-based

² <http://www.un.org/documents/resga.html>

organizations from around the world. The Global Forum was the first to convene senior-most religious leaders, faith-based service-delivery organizations, and UN representatives together around issues of population and development since the ICPD in 1994. The Forum recorded a historic commitment from the FBOs and UNFPA to the dignity of all, and to strengthen their partnerships to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

When FBOs and religious leaders from around the world joined UNFPA at the Global Forum, they brought with them the experience of UNFPA's preparatory regional fora. The FBOs who gathered in Istanbul were existing partners of UNFPA, nominated and sometime accompanied by UNFPA Country Offices. Within the opening hours of the Global Forum, it was clear that the diverse participants had indeed gathered under the common pursuit of human dignity – an ideal that knows no religious boundaries, and is central to the entire rights-oriented development world.



The Road to Istanbul: A Culturally-Sensitive Methodology

Building on a three decade legacy of engaging FBOs, UNFPA carried out a global mapping survey in 2006, which was updated and expanded through 2007 and 2008. The mapping of FBO engagement identified over 100 different partnerships with Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu groups in over 75 countries.

From December 2007 through September 2008, UNFPA hosted a series of regional-level FBO fora:

1. Africa - Durban, South Africa, December 4-5 2007
2. Asia - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, May 5-7 2008
3. Arab States - Cairo, Egypt, July 20-21 2008
4. Latin America & Caribbean - Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 16-17 2008

Each forum had the following objectives:

1. Convening and showcasing the largest number of international FBOs working on reproductive health, population and development;
2. Launching an Interfaith Network on Population and Development;
3. Compiling lessons learned and recommendations to enhance partnerships with FBOs on population and development;
4. Reaching Consensus on principles for the way forward for strengthening strategic partnership with FBOs.

Participants, representing the diversity of religious, geographic, institutional and gender representation, were able to:

1. Share their experiences of working on the themes/issues generally;
2. Narrate cases of partnership with UNFPA on these issues, lessons learned and success stories;
3. Provide concrete recommendations as to enhancing the partnerships for better service delivery;
4. Suggest concrete guidance for the working modality of the Interfaith Network for Population and Development.

The Fora enabled a celebration of these partnerships, launching of the Interfaith Networks on Population and Development, and an assertion of joint commitments to further collaboration. Moreover, the Interfaith Networks serve as tools for the ongoing mobilization of those FBOs who are engaged in a human rights-based approach to development to connect with related NGOs and other organizations motivated by a similar mandate.

Hosting these regional consultations helped to ensure that the issues most relevant to each region were correctly noted and assessed in advance; and that the strongest UNFPA partners among the FBOs (those who are committed to the MDGs, and who have successfully executed programmatic initiatives with UNFPA) were identified, and invited to the Global Forum.

The Regional and Global Fora have thus provided a unique opportunity to both launch the Interfaith Networks on Population and Development and bring faith-based partnerships to the forefront of the reproductive health and population agenda, in dialogue with secular United Nations development counterparts. UNFPA continues to view these partnerships as an opportunity to build bridges between critical partners and stakeholder consolidation towards the MDGs.

Overview of the Istanbul Forum's Consultative Process

The Global Forum comprised five thematic panels, determined by key issue areas of the ICPD. This Report is structured along the sequence of these panels. The first panel, on *HIV and AIDS and Maternal Health*, allowed faith-based workers to share their initiatives and experiences in

prevention, care, and treatment of those affected and infected by the disease. Discussions highlighted the profound commitment of religious leaders and FBOs around the world to combat the stigma attached to HIV, and brought to light the dynamic responses of faith-based leaders working on culturally-specific, and religiously-sensitive materials to help combat the spread HIV and other STIs.

These discussions were followed by the panel on *Youth and Migration*, and on *Violence Against Women and Women's Empowerment*. Many participants shared concerns about the ongoing practice of violence against women, despite longstanding rhetoric to combat the phenomenon by governments and political leaders around the world. Faith-based representatives expressed a widespread need to further engage with like-minded media sources to help foster norms surrounding women's equal status with men, and combat the practice of gender-based violence.

The fourth panel at the Global Forum addressed *Emergencies and Humanitarian Settings*. FBOs and religious leaders shared their experiences in providing both spiritual and material care and relief for local communities in the face of natural disasters, and conflict.

The fifth panel gave the stage to representatives of the United Nations agencies involved in the Inter-agency Taskforce on Engagement with Faith-based Organisations, hosted first by UNFPA in July 2008. Representatives of bodies such as UNAIDS, UNIFEM, UN-Habitat, and the World Bank shared their experiences of engagement with FBOs in the distinct mandate areas of each agency, and encouraged faith-based representatives to continue to be forthcoming with needs, priorities, and recommendations for collective action.

The closing session at the Global Forum facilitated dynamic discussion that directly echoed the panel title: *Sharing Consensus on Interfaith Networking with UNFPA*.

In this report, we have tried as much as possible to narrate the case studies in the speakers' own words. Yet, this is not a transcript of the proceedings, but a highlighting of certain features and insights. From each thematic section, we elucidated the key recommendations made by the diverse FBO participants both within their own presentations as well as in ensuing discussions.

Forum Outcomes: A Long-term Vision and Modality of Partnership

The Global Forum culminated in the launch of the Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development. The Network reflects the collective commitment of FBOs and religious leaders around the world to work together, as well as with UNFPA, to realize the ICPD agenda.

The basic terms of partnership of the Network are outlined in one of the outcomes of the Forum, the Istanbul Consensus. Not only does the Istanbul Consensus provide grounds to strengthen existing alliances, it also paves the way for future partnerships and collaborations amongst and between FBOs, religious leaders, and United Nations agencies.

II - RELIGIOUS LEADERS' COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIP

Religious leaders representing all the faiths UNFPA has partnered with, were called upon to share their commitment to working on issues of reproductive health, gender equality and population, and their belief in partnerships, particularly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The following are paraphrased excerpts from the different commitment messages shared.

Mr. Anish Dua, on behalf of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, India



Speaking on behalf of The Art of Living Foundation, a spiritual organisation, I am representing His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Ji who has sent his blessings and wishes for meaningful deliberations and positive outcomes in this Global Forum of Faith-Based Organisations on Population and Development.

As observed by Sri Sri, “the 21st Century is a period of interdependence, and we need to work together to bring social transformations”. The world over people and organisations work for the benefit and improvement of humanity, and yet suffering never ends. This is due to the fact that communities cocoon themselves in the garb of names, identities, nationalities and religions. When the essence of religion and spirituality is a universal human value, then it is vital that we drop our miniscule identities, join hands, and take bigger responsibilities to make this world free of disease, stress, and social evils.

We have been working for human dignity and human development for the last 25 years, and in the last 3 years the Art of Living Foundation, in collaboration with UNFPA, started campaigns against the practice of sex selection in India. The beginning of this relationship was a conclave of religious leaders titled, Faith for Action against Sex Selection. The conclave was attended by over 70 leaders of faith-based organizations; a pledge was signed against the practice of sex selection. This was a wonderful beginning under the guidance of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Ji, where religious leaders of such diversity demonstrated solidarity on such a sensitive social issue. After that we worked together further on issues like youth empowerment, and preventing gender-based violence.

It is important to mention here that His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Ji is repeatedly asking people to commit themselves to the Millennium Development Goals. In 2008 The Art of Living Foundation initiated two three month long initiatives, called Mission Green Earth and the Stand Up campaign, where millions of people all over the world took a pledge for a greener earth and made commitments to end poverty.

Many partners of The Art of Living Foundation are running their own independent programs on the issues of sex selection, youth, violence against women, poverty, the environment, and together we work on the prevention of problems to ensure that we do damage control well before it is too late. We believe that when people get involved collectively with higher causes, they have greater capacities for change as individuals. Through the work of organisations such as the Art of Living Foundation, people can become effective workers with a deeper sense of responsibility and faith that the Divine chose them to be associated with such noble causes.

We deeply acknowledge and are committed for the partnership with UNFPA and other faith-based organisations, for these partnerships catalyze the process of change and enhances capacities for practical action on urgent issues facing humankind. Gratitude to all, and may peace be upon all. Om Shanti Shanti Shanti.

Venerable Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, Thailand

I am Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, a Buddhist monk, representing the Buddhist community from Thailand. Today, I would like to share why we, religious figures, should take part in making a commitment to help solve issues such as HIV and AIDS, violence against women, humanitarian crises, youth, and migration issues.

In the Buddhist belief, the life cycle of every being is a natural cycle, and one that all living things must face. People, animals and plants alike all go through the stages of being born, aging, getting sick, and dying. Every living thing has its own path in life, depending on their deeds either in the past life or in this current one. The struggles one faces, or the opportunities one has, are the result of one's own action. However, we also believe that each person is born with the ability to learn and develop. From a holistic perspective, this means that people will be able to work towards enlightenment through self-practice, as our mentor Lord Buddha and his disciples have done in the past.



As a disciple, one of our main responsibilities is to help people realize the cause and affect of actions so that people will make choices that will not harm themselves or others. The Buddha teaches us, his followers, to devote ourselves to develop our lives, and contribute to making others happy and being content with life. When we integrate this with the laymen's lifestyle, it means helping guide those who are troubled, or facing difficult times. In today's context, it means helping those at risk of disease, the vulnerable, and others in need. However, as a faith-based organisation, our methods differ from our worldly counterparts. We are not in a position where we can offer money or belongings, as we ourselves live off offerings from the community. Therefore, it is our responsibility to contribute back to our communities the things that they lack. In many areas of Thailand, temples continue to serve as community centres, and monks are respected and seen as co-leaders along with elected community leaders. Thus, we hold a position where we can play a major role in making contributions and generate participation amongst community members. In this respect, our actions become significant in influencing local norms. This is because people believe in our wisdom and guidance, and therefore if we lead them into something good and useful, we will be able to help them in a way that is sustainable.

I am certain that the issues we will be discussing during the coming two days on HIV and AIDS and maternal health, youth and migration, violence against women and women's empowerment, and emergencies and humanitarian settings, can all be embedded in the people's mindsets if we are committed to raising their awareness. The methods of awareness-raising may be different in each culture and religion, but the end results will be for the good of all people. Our action as leaders or representatives of faiths may not be able to cure those affected by HIV and AIDS, but it may help to prolong their lives and live peacefully in their own communities, and also decrease further spread of the disease. It will not stop mothers or children from dying during childbirth, but it may create a safer environment for them and decrease unnecessary deaths. As for issues surrounding youth, migrants, and women, we can help to create opportunities for them to stand up on their own. In emergencies and humanitarian settings, we can help the people through moral support, and try to keep them calm. If people's minds are at peace they will be able to think and find the solutions to what they need, but if they panic they will be at risk, weak and highly vulnerable to all types of sicknesses, mental and physical.

I would like to emphasize that it is in our duty as faith-based organisations and religious figures to take action in cooperation with UNFPA and other development organisations, and that action should be carried out in holistic ways in order to contribute to the minimization of problems experienced by our communities.

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, United Kingdom



I am a Sikh, follower of Guru Nanak, subscribing to the principles and objectives of UNFPA. The Sikh religion, or Dharam as I prefer to call it, came into being in 1469. It is a religion 539 years of age. It is distinct and unique, not an offshoot of any other religion, but resonating with all religions of the world. I cannot claim to represent my faith, or Dharam, but can only reflect a small part of it. Religions are too vast, too pure, too infinite, and too sacred for individuals to 'represent' them.

Let me make a statement: we live today in a world that is mired in violence, exploitation, conflict, insecurity, and human suffering, and recently, economic crisis and meltdown. The apparent causes and symptoms of human suffering are poverty, lack of education, and injustice at all levels – local, regional, national and global; inequity in the distribution of wealth; poor governance and poor leadership; violations of human rights and crimes against human dignity, respect and honour, as well as practicing arrogance and intolerance;

political pressure and force; unethical practices; irresponsible media; lack of tolerance or sensitivity towards religions, social or ethnic groups; ignorance about religious practices and beliefs of others; religious hypocrisies; failure to meet psychological, social and economic needs of people; negative perceptions of other religions; stigmatizing of other religions; lack of social justice; glorification of gun-culture; uncoordinated, disjointed reconciliatory efforts of different players and actors, including governments, civil society, and international partners; lack of inter-religious education; lack of admission of wrong doings and willingness to seek forgiveness; insensitive use of words; double standards and stereotyping; the human ego; and exploitation.

In July 2008, a document called 'Face to Face, Side by Side: A Framework for Partnership in our Multi-faith Society' was launched by the Government of the United Kingdom. The document explores how faith communities, government and wider societies can work together to encourage and enable greater local activity to bring people with different religions and beliefs together. A highlight of the report was that faith leaders have an important role to play in encouraging people to get involved in dialogue and social action. Faith Communities should disseminate information about the importance of interfaith interaction and dialogue to their followers and congregations.

As a representative of an FBO and a faith leader, I commit to:

- *Proclaiming my conviction that exploitation and violence are incompatible with authentic spirit of Dharam (religion).*
- *Working together for the common good, and uniting to build a better society. In this day and age, global has become local, and local is global. Humanity has become an extended family. We breathe the same air, drink the same water, and tread the same earth. There is a total interdependence between human beings, animals, vegetation and the environment. Global issues are therefore a shared responsibility.*
- *Re-establishing respect for religion, faith, or traditions, many of which have been hijacked, misrepresented, misquoted, and misused. Faith traditions are a rich repository of wisdom, which must be mobilized for the common good. Interfaith and inter-religious cooperation is important. In the 21st century, to be religious is to be inter-religious. Dialogue is essential for forming genuine partnerships.*
- *Affirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*
- *Forgiving one another, and standing up for justice and peace, which are inseparable.*
- *Using technology and media with sensitivity and frugality.*
- *Fusing secularity and spirituality for the common good.*
- *Providing education that is value led, as opposed to just for wealth creation, accumulation, and fueling of the ego.*
- *Establishing cohesion within families within communities, nationally and internationally, and strengthening the sacred institution of marriage.*
- *Encouraging disarmament and the absence of conflicts and war.*

These global issues can only be solved with a change in people's mindsets. Today there is a need for a new planetary consciousness. Individuals must be empowered with values such as mercy, compassion, forgiveness, truthfulness, selflessness, benevolence, altruism, humility, and abundance of love. Created in God's image, there is a need for humans to instill within ourselves these Godly qualities. We have to eradicate and discard human greed, revenge, arrogance, and hate. We have to create space in our hearts for others. Tolerating others will not suffice. We have to inculcate within ourselves a culture of love and sacrifice for the other.

Elias Szczynicki, Argentina

I wanted to celebrate the Jewish holiday Sukkoth by being here in Istanbul. Our people want peace. As a religious community, we are trying to create an atmosphere of peace and understanding, and I would like to talk about our perception of contemporary issues and ideas. Alliances are created to bring us together. There is a difference between a simple 'contract' and an 'alliance'. An alliance happens when two parties come together on equal footing to exchange ideas, whether commercial or social, which can give birth to various other partnerships. The basis of an alliance should be respect for one another, and integrity to create an environment of trust and growth. In an alliance, we work in unison, for the benefit of the partnership, to benefit all members of the alliance. There is no place for competition in an

alliance, because an alliance is about equal distribution. If we compete with one another, it is no longer an alliance. We must establish the identity of our alliance, as this is central to its longevity. I want to share with you three examples from history, which come to mind. First, God's alliance with Noah; second, His alliance with the Prophet Abraham; and finally, His alliance with Moses. These nature of partnership and the idea of 'working together' in these examples remind us of the difference between alliance and contracts.

Imagine an alliance of peoples from different religions. An alliance based on faith provides common hope when all members believe in the same future and have similar hopes and goals, particularly from examples of the Prophets. During the period of the Prophets, the world was threatened with a flood, and Noah's Ark was a source of hope and inspiration to humanity. The flood represented an alliance of destiny for all humanity, and an alliance of destiny is even more profound than an alliance of faith.

Like God and Noah, we have come together in Istanbul to talk about global problems threatening humanity. As representatives of FBOs we take this issue very seriously. We are in an alliance of destiny. Destiny comes before everything else, and it is important to keep this in mind.

We need to understand the world in which we live, so that we can pass on our values to the next generation. No one is being asked to quit their faith or their beliefs. By keeping in mind our common fate, we can come together in an alliance of destiny. In partnership, all members can be messengers and owners of this alliance of destiny. Today we have taken a step forward, and this will be marked in history. This meeting marks the beginnings of promising ways to resolve the problems we face in the world. We can share responsibility for the problems facing humanity, while at the same time practicing our own belief systems. Across the world we are experiencing the same problems – such as HIV and AIDS, migration, and violence against women – regardless of our religions. We are going to talk about these issues, and we will solve them together. Joseph cried for what his sisters and brothers went through in their lives, and we should have the same mindset. We should no longer keep silent, and instead work hand in hand. We should walk hand in hand in this alliance of destiny.

Reverend Julio E. Murray, Latin America and the Caribbean

Accept our greetings from the Board of Directors and the General Secretary of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI). I stand in representation of 180 Churches and Ecumenical Christian organisations, whose members confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, and we respond to the common mandate for unity among Christians through a vocation of mission and ministry for the glory of God. The Latin American Council of Churches comprises the churches and organisations in 21 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean. Our objectives are to promote the unity of the people of God; to stimulate and support our members in the work of evangelism; and to be a creative space for the promotion of theological reflection and pastoral dialogue on mission strategies and Christian witness.

This year we celebrated 30 years of service in the Ecumenical movement. We seek to represent the diversity and richness of the Christian world in Latin America, which is Afro, Latin, and Indian; a multi-cultural and multiethnic reality. We walk alongside Churches and Ecumenical organisations in five regional structures that serve through a variety of programmes, including: UME – the Unity, Mission and Evangelism program; the Liturgy program; the Women and Justice for Gender pastoral program; the Youth pastoral program; the Human Sexuality and Reproductive Health program; FES – the Faith, Economy and Society program; the Global Warming and the Environment program with the UN (PNUMA); the Program Against Violence and Promotion of Peace; the Promotion and Communications program; as well as pastoral work with indigenous peoples and people of Afro-descent to combat discrimination and racism.

As we journey through complexities and challenges, we constantly find the need for change. The word ‘change’ has gained importance in the social, political, and economic scenarios, as well as in the ecclesiastical forums. It is the change that seeks to break away from the structures that promote life threatening issues; change that challenges actual systems of power and domination, which foster exclusion, violence and profound inequalities among our people; change that brings broad participation and the building of new relationships and partnerships. Here in Istanbul we explore the tremendous value of partnership between faith-based organisations and UNFPA.

We recognize that there is a development process that is taking place in Latin America. Yet although we hear of economic boom, we are yet to see the positive impact of the economy on the social reality of the region. We recognize the participation of our sisters, yet they continue to be victims of violence and discrimination. We talk about the importance of youth, yet it seems we want them to silent today as we label them as being too consumerist. Now, it is time to walk the walk, and talk the talk. The partnership between UNFPA and CLAI gives us the opportunity to move forward in the areas of gender equality, human sexuality, reproductive health, population and development. These are areas that are contemplated in the social ministry of Churches.

Through partnerships with faith-based organisations, UNFPA is better equipped to be an effective partner in regional mechanisms to develop joint programmes, and to participate at regional levels, and support country operations. Through partnership, CLAI would be strengthened in the pastoral and prophetic ministries. Churches would be able to respond to the diakonic service ministry, as well as in mission and evangelism, and have positive impacts in the public sphere.

We are part of this commitment, and our first step is to prepare the leaders of Churches, whether they are lay people or clergy. Through training, Ministers are better enabled to identify the needs of people, and have access to different resources that can transform a reality of death into a reality of Life Abundant, as described in John 10:10. A new reality is possible, but we have to decide on active participation in the transformative processes that are taking place. We accept the invitation and the challenge, and with the help of God, we will respond.

*May the mercy of God be in our favor and reach us,
May the Love of God move us in concrete actions towards each other and His creation,
May the power of the Spirit of God unite us to witness in the name of One God: creator,
redeemer and sustainer of us all.
Amen.*

Grand Mufti Sheikh Shaaban Mubaje, Uganda

In Africa, we watch with keen interest the activities of UNFPA in thematic areas such as reproductive health, gender rights, and population and development. These issues point to high rates of maternal mortality, deaths due to HIV and AIDS, and gender-based violence. We need to improve the quality of life, and to do so we endorse UNFPA to address gender-based violence, and to promote the rights of women and children. We are united in our strength and efforts as leaders. I call upon FBOs to prioritize and address harmful practices, including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). We need to educate the public that risky behavior leads to increased risk of contracting HIV and AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). I call upon Imams, Sheikhs and other religious leaders and FBOs, to join UNFPA in its bid to promote the rights of every man, woman, and child to enjoy equal opportunities in life.

Imam Sheikh Hassan Ezzeddine Ali Bahr al Uloom, Iraq

Islam provides a strong basis for the idea of 'partnership' with others. We must cooperate for the common good, and reject that which harms humanity. I believe UNFPA is consolidating its partnership with FBOs to bring about change. This change gives religious leaders the chance to reinforce interreligious cooperation, and to bring it to the global level, which is why we are here today.

Religion has always had a strong connection to local communities, and faith-based organisations have a long history of providing services to their congregations. But this connection needs to be expanded to benefit all humanity, as today we are confronted with issues that endanger the continuation of humanity itself.

We need to express this opportunity for change through actions, so that we can better face modern challenges. The role of UNFPA will be reflected in actions, and the results will appear in all countries. The idea of partnership between UNFPA and FBOs is a brilliant initiative, and one that deserves



attention and care. Human societies are confronted with both positive and negative realities. We have to defend the rights of women to live in peace, to be free of the threat of violence, and to have their dignity protected and maintained in every respect.

Yet we have not yet come together collectively with all resources pooled, to ensure the empowerment of women. There is a great need to re-examine tribal and traditional customs that do not always favour the rights of women. We should look to science for the best results – and indeed we are instructed by Islam to do so.

Our objective should be equality for all human beings. In Islam, we are instructed to denounce discrimination, be it based on color, race, or class. Islam promotes equity and equality for all members of society. The framework for a Global Interfaith Network should be humanitarianism.

It is important to better understand civilizations, and to bring out the common denominators between culture and societies, in order to feel secure and peaceful. Religious organisations can do a lot at the international level, particularly in times of crisis, on many fronts, including the political, economic, and social spheres.

Societies are suffering and they can't be left alone. Poverty, HIV and AIDS, and violence in the family, are global issues. We must cooperate as we calling for more efforts to resolve these problems. We need interfaith cooperation to bring ethics to forefront of international efforts, and in this way we can give religion the chance that it deserves to be a partner in solving the urgent issues that face all humankind.

III – Panel I: HIV and AIDS, AND MATERNAL HEALTH

The challenges facing FBOs as they work with those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS are numerous. Forum participants expressed a particular need for increased training programmes on HIV and AIDS, and there was a strong call for increased technical knowledge on how to deal with the pandemic in times of emergencies, humanitarian crises, and natural disasters.

As the Global Forum unfolded, the weight of the HIV and AIDS problem was made ever clear, as it infiltrated the other panels on youth and migration, women’s empowerment, and emergencies and humanitarian settings.



L-R : Fagmeeda Miller, Mongia Souafi, Malek Afzali, Hafedh Chekir, Djamal Frontbek Kyzy, Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Geertje van Mensvoort.

The case of South Africa

Fagmeeda Miller, *Positive Muslims*

One cannot survive the AIDS pandemic without the support of religion and faith. My husband died of AIDS, and I contracted the virus from him. In the past, when religious leaders spoke of HIV, they were ignorant, and spoke of blame for victims of the disease as having caused their own fate. Those that were HIV positive were looked upon in a negative way. I was equally ignorant of

HIV and AIDS, but I knew that I did nothing wrong, and wanted to make a difference.

“I made a vow to myself, and the Almighty, that no other Muslim would be discriminated against again simply because they were HIV positive.”

Fagmeeda Miller

In my heart, I knew that Allah was most forgiving, and did not blame me for being HIV-positive. Where was the compassion that the Quran speaks of? I felt compelled to break the silence, so I became

active in advocacy and education on issues related to my condition. I made a vow to myself, and the Almighty, that no other Muslim would be discriminated against again for being HIV-positive, and that they would receive the support they deserved. At that time there were no Muslim support groups for people infected with HIV, so I joined a Christian support group. It was through this group that I learned of the challenges that lay ahead, for myself and other Muslims living with HIV and AIDS. I resolved to combat the stigma associated with being HIV

positive in the Muslim community, and seven years ago established Positive Muslims, with the aim of delivering critically needed services to the Muslim community. It took four years to get Positive Muslims off the ground. I am an activist within the Islamic framework, but I am also active in other groups. A friend once said to me, “a Muslim living according to the Quran cannot get AIDS.” This is what is really killing people living with HIV and AIDS – the stigma that we have to live with.

Over the years, religious leaders have become much more supportive. And last year witnessed the first conference of Positive Muslims. With this, that I know what I have gone through was not in vain.

The case of Tunisia

Professor Mongia Nefzi Souaihi, *University of Tunis*

In the Arab region, we have created an interfaith network of Christian and Muslim faith-based organisations, comprised of more than 250 religious leaders. One of the first meetings of our network was held in Damascus, Syria, and there we explicitly addressed ways to uphold ICPD objectives. We have established consultative courses with religious leaders, where they become better equipped in the areas of prevention and treatment for those living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. In addition, we have established training programs that specifically target, and highlighting the role of, women religious leaders. So far we have partnered with over eighty women religious figures in care and prevention methods for HIV and AIDS.

We have also produced a number of publications on using culturally sensitive approaches to address issues such as reproductive health and rights, and HIV and AIDS. We have created separate publications for Christian and Muslim voices, yet stress common denominators to address these social issues.

Having established ourselves in the community and the field, we were in a position to introduce changes, and there has been an increase in public demand for courses on HIV and AIDS. Therefore, we have conducted courses not only in Tunisia, but



“If we do not have religious leaders as our partners, it will make our task much harder, given the respect they enjoy in local communities.”

Prof. Mongia Nefzi Souaihi

also abroad in Somalia, and Lebanon, for example. In our work on HIV and AIDS, we are in a unique position to analyze and document the impact that religious leaders were having on their community of believers. It is important to realize that if we do not have religious leaders as our partners, it will make our task much harder, given the respect that they enjoy.

Another initiative we undertook was the establishment of a drug treatment centre in Alexandria, Egypt, for intravenous drug users (IDUs). Yet although we have experienced numerous successes since our formative years, we need to stay focused to maintain the momentum of the consultative process and training programs – not only for HIV and AIDS, but also for other social issues such as discrimination and violence against women. Today, women are training other women, and we need to harness the progress we have made to drive for further changes.

The case of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Professor Hossein Malek Afzali, *Tehran University*

Evidence-based dialogue with religious leaders and policymakers has proven to be a suitable approach when conducted within the framework of indigenous beliefs and culture. An example would be to look at the evidence on the benefits of family planning and the harms of early, late or repeated pregnancies, in the Islamic Republic of Iran. When this evidence was presented in dialogue with religious leaders, as well as the government, it led to the implementation and full political backing of the national Family Planning Programme. The Family Planning Programme of Iran led to a reduction in the fertility rate from 5.4 to 2.1 in a period of 20 years. The figures can be partially attributed to the cooperation that has taken place over the years between Islamic scholars and UNFPA.

The same can be said of the implementation of a programme on adolescent sexual and reproductive health, when relevant teachings of Islam were coupled with evidence-based, scientific research, to influence social attitudes and achieve practical change. Islamic scholars employed the religious injunction that ‘fathers and mothers are obliged to teach their children the skills and knowledge of their time’ to encourage families to teach their adolescents issues related to puberty and sexual health as appropriate to their age.

Unfortunately, today youth receive a wealth of information from mediums such as television, and the internet. Yet this information is often incorrect, misleading, and damaging to young people. Therefore, we must continue to take initiative and keep up with the realities of modern life, including the needs and aspirations of young people. The Iranian experience shows that a good way to do this in local settings is to couple evidence-based, scientific research with local norms informed by faith and culture.

“Evidence-based dialogue with religious leaders and policymakers is a suitable approach when conducted within the framework of indigenous beliefs and culture.”

Prof. Hossein Malek Afzali

The Case of Kyrgyzstan

Jamal Frontbek Kyzy, *Mutakalim* (religious women's NGO)

Since the demise of the Soviet Union over eighteen years ago, Islam has grown to play a prominent role in Kyrgyzs life. Religious leaders are in a position to play an important role in my country in terms of educating people about HIV and AIDS, family planning, and reproductive health. This is because people place greater trust in their religious leaders, than they do with certified medical doctors. Due to this reality, we have conducted over one hundred trainings sessions for religious leaders, who zealously transmit the knowledge they gain from the seminars to other religious figures and those in the wider community.

"Religious leaders zealously transmit the knowledge they gain from our seminars to those in the wider community."

Jamal Frontbek Kyzy

As an example of the progress we have made, more and more young people are getting involved and taking part in the trainings we offer on various aspects of health. We have also done research and published papers on the attitudes of religious leaders towards secular policies. And we have published five brochures to communicate to the public the importance of

family planning and reproductive health. These are centred around themes such as family in Islam; the rights and responsibilities of both men and women; the legal foundation of women's rights; and reproductive rights and motherhood.

In addition to these initiatives and our training modules, we need to be more proactive in fighting for better rights for women. We need to increase the pressure on this issue, and foster Islamic leaders for the realities of the 21st Century.

The Case of Latin America and the Caribbean

Reverend Judith Van Osdol



I will share with you some of the experiences of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI). In particular, I would like to speak of the safe spaces we are creating around the issue of gender justice in relation to HIV and AIDS. The issue of HIV and AIDS has graced spaces so as to require re-readings of the Bible from a gender perspective. By doing so, the Church has fostered environments for healing and wholeness. Slowly, women have moved away from being the bearers of stereotypes, to being the bearers of human rights.

Yet we still operate in a larger environment that remains dominated by the machismo personality, a dominant patriarchy, where women have few to no rights. The light of modernity or post modernity has not penetrated the stained glass window of machismo, and patriarchy, as it has other social ills.

“Se Potencian: ‘to become more than they are separately.’ This is how I see the relationship between UNFPA and the Latin American Council of Churches.”

Rev. Judith Van Osdol

The unmitigated spread of HIV is about as much a health issue as Hurricane Katrina was a weather issue. Just as the Hurricane was blind to class, so too is HIV to gender inequality. The widely accepted ABC approach to combating the spread of HIV – Abstinence, Be faithful, Condoms – can be damaging to women. Abstinence is broken more than condoms. In some cases, married women are more vulnerable to HIV than commercial sex workers (CSW), because married women are denied rights, such as to say ‘no’ to sex with their husbands, or to encourage and initiate use of condoms. Inequality between men and women increases the risk of HIV and AIDS, and the associated prospect of maternal mortality.

CLAI is grateful to the respect that UNFPA has shown in its work with religious leaders, in selecting the foci for action in consultation and with sensitivity, and never imposing particular theological viewpoints. Together, we must fight for the rights of women – in particular their reproductive rights – and we must sustain this fight. We have to strengthen alliances and communities, and acknowledge their action. We have a lovely phrase in Spanish: *Se Potencian* – to become more than they are separately. This is how I see the relationship between CLAI and UNFPA. We have a shared language, a shared agenda, and a shared model of empowerment to create spaces of transformation.

Discussion

Together, United Nations representatives, faith-based workers, and religious leaders agreed that HIV and AIDS is a global problem that requires ongoing synergistic and systematic action. Participants raised the need to form interfaith networks and strengthen cooperation with development organizations to combat HIV and AIDS, pointing to the reality that the virus itself makes no distinction between religions, or between the secular and the religious.

Of central concern to representatives of grassroots FBOs was the need to combat stigma and discrimination. Mr. Alaa Hammawi, of the Interfaith Arab HIV&AIDS religious leaders’ network *Chahama*, shared with other Forum participants the initiative taken by Muslim religious leaders in Syria, to spread positive messages of understanding about HIV and AIDS during the Friday Sermons in the different mosques around the country. Chahama, which was created, nurtured and supported by UNDP’s Arab Regional Programme on HIV and AIDS, has produced several religious edicts and guidance notes for Imams and Christian religious leaders on dealing with People Living with HIV and AIDS, as well as to counter stigma and discrimination.

Mr. Hammawi also spoke of the progress made in reducing maternal mortality in the Northern districts of Syria. Forum participants expressed consensus on the need for greater local-level advocacy to bring the issues of maternal mortality into the public consciousness, and highlighted the potential of this through sustained partnerships with, and capacity building of FBOs

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNFPA and secular civil society organisations should work with FBOs and religious leaders to foster positive responses to People Living with HIV (PLWHIV).
- UNFPA and representatives of the religious communities should work together to establish and/or strengthen Interfaith Networks prepared for the challenges of the 21st Century, with tasks such as disseminating knowledge on reproductive health, and advocating against domestic violence, against stigmatization of HIV+ people, and for more integration of FBO voices, perspectives and presence in national HIV, AIDS and maternal health planning.
- Faith-based organisations should encourage youth participation in the design and implementation of programmes on sexual health and reproductive rights.
- UNFPA should support FBOs by facilitating and supporting training and other capacity building opportunities to enable FBOs to access the latest evidence-based knowledge on HIV and AIDS, especially on the interlinkages with maternal health issues.

IV – Panel II: YOUTH AND MIGRATION

Migration is an age-old phenomenon. Contemporary causes of migration include natural disasters, employment, lack of education opportunities, economic necessity, conflict, religious persecution, and gender-based violence.

As numerous Forum participants pointed out, many young people from rural areas seek to improve their living conditions and perceived advantages of life in urban centres. Yet just as migration brings with it many opportunities, it also poses great risks. Many young migrants face poverty and hunger that could result in criminal behavior such as drug smuggling and armed robberies. The adverse effects of migration also include male and female prostitution, and heightened health risks such as HIV and AIDS and other STIs.

Forum participants expressed significant concern over the criminalisation of migration, and the risks of crossing borders for migrants seeking labour. Participants also highlighted the negative consequences of the ‘brain drain’ phenomenon for home country. In concluding, Forum participants agreed on the need for further engagement of service providers around migrant concerns, rights and particularly youth migrants while also integrating FBOs in their work.



L-R: Interpreter, Sheikh Tayseer Tamini, Rev. Pax Tan, Mufti Sheikh Shaaban Mubaje, Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Sister Ngozi Uti, Interpreter.

The case of Swaziland

Bishop Meshak Mabuza, *Swaziland Council of Churches*

Poverty levels are high in Swaziland. The average wage is far below the internationally accepted poverty line of two US dollars per day. For economic reasons, women migrate in large numbers to South Africa. High rates of internal migration from rural to urban areas can be attributed to three key factors: lack of health care facilities, lack of recreational facilities, and inadequate housing. In this socio-economic context, both men and women resort to sex work. Trafficking of women for sex-work is common in cross border areas.

“Through partnerships with UNFPA, FBOs from different countries and regions can also come together and learn from one another, to better combat the most urgent issues facing humankind.”

Bishop Meshak Mabuza

Migration can be viewed as a social justice issue in Swaziland. In the context of freedom of movement, migration is a human right.

Faith-based organisations are assisting in alleviating the suffering of internally displaced people, as well as young people. Recently, the Swaziland Council of Churches conducted a project with the South African Government, due to a sporadic rise in xenophobic violence in South Africa. In addition, a number of FBOs provide material assistance and spiritual healing for domestic workers, as well as education for those most at risk of HIV and unwanted pregnancies.

The case of Tunisia

Professor Mizouri Laroussi, *University of Tunisia*

Youth represent the continuity of the human race, and therefore we must make every effort to ensure their wellbeing. International migration is part of the globalization phenomenon. The reasons for migration are many, and include economic, cultural, and political factors. The demand for skilled labor is of particular relevance in to address the issue of migration.

It is important to consider the relationship between migration and the spread of HIV and AIDS. For example, when youth are away from their families and homes, they may have less access to contraceptive methods, or be less confident or inclined to seek care and support.

Similarly, there is an important relationship between youth, religion, and migration. When young people leave their homes in search of better employment opportunities, they often face great adversity and difficulties, particularly when migrating from rural to urban areas, or migrating to another country. In addition, inter-generational violence is prevalent in migrant families, as children of migrants often abandon the traditions of parents, and assume the cultural norms of the new land, resulting in significant distress on both sides. In these contexts migrants – particularly young people – often seek protection in religion, and look for refuge in

churches or mosques. Therefore, in partnership with UNFPA, faith-based organisations have an opportunity to ensure the wellbeing and protection of migrants and young people through enhanced services.

The case of Papua New Guinea

Pastor John Wemin

Youth migration is not new. Papua New Guinea has a population of just under six million people, who speak over seven hundred different languages. Youth migrate predominantly from rural to urban centres, and less than 1 percent migrate overseas. Migration to urban areas reflects the desire of the youth for greater economic opportunities, education, and social services, including sport facilities. Many rural villages and towns, for example, host primary school facilities, yet when young people have completed that part of their schooling, they must move to the city to pursue secondary and tertiary degrees.

"I believe FBOs and religious leaders have great moral authority. The people listen to us more than any political leader."

Pastor John Wemin

Many young people face poverty and hunger when migrating from rural to urban areas. This is not the case in the rural areas, where the land is owned by local members of the community, not the state. Furthermore, it can be extremely difficult to secure employment once in the city, and even when one succeeds to do so, pay rates are often very low. These factors lead to

squatting, drug smuggling, or resorting to crimes such as armed robberies. Such acts are not only perpetrated by men, but also by young, desperate women. In addition, HIV and AIDS is spreading in Papua New Guinea.

Although politicians are mandated by the people, and have power and authority over churches, faith-based leaders have greater moral authority over the people. It is important that all service providers are aware of this and can integrate the FBOs and the sympathetic religious leaders in the work for, and about, young people.

The case of Armenia

Karen Nazaryan, *World Council of Churches Armenia*

Armenia is a small landlocked country, a neighbor to Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Iran. The collapse of the Soviet Union, led to regional conflicts and greater inequality. A working group of three Christian churches, as part of the World Council of Churches in Armenia, has begun to address the challenges, and youth is one of the organisation's priorities.

One third of the total population of Armenia has migrated to the country in the last 10 years. In the context of social and political upheaval, the migration of criminals is a significant concern. Enabling and empowering local churches to deal with these issues is one of the organisation's priorities.

"The first place that victims of trafficking go to is the Church, and the Church reacts quickly."

Karen Nazaryan

Another problem is regional peace. Armenia is in disagreement with Azerbaijan over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia is host to over 5,000 secular and faith-based organisations. Yet only two of these have dealt with issues of peace and security, including the alliance of three Churches as part of the World Council. The organisation selected two villages, just two hundred meters from each other, one in Armenia and the other in Azerbaijan. Members of the Church filmed the lives of those in the villages, documenting the ideas and thoughts of individuals.

Based on the films, the Church initiated dialogue between the two countries, on areas of both agreement and disagreement. As the Church continues to play a role in conflict resolution, it is essential to learn about stories from other contexts, such as Northern Ireland, and other Balkan states, and this is a concrete area that can be facilitated by the international community.

The case of Brazil

Hna Maria dos Carmo dos Santos Gonclaves, *National Conference of Bishops of Brazil*

2005 witnessed the death of 32,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 20 years in Brazil. This figure indicates the social crises surrounding young people in Brazil, including issues such as lack of education, drug use, crime, and sexual exploitation. The unemployment rate is 39.8 percent. Despite the will and desire of young people to improve their conditions, attempts to find a better life in the cities often leads to further unemployment, and inability to access education opportunities and vocational training. Conditions of unemployment and lack of education lead to further problems such as increased violence, particularly within struggling families.

Young people need to believe in a brighter future. The Church is critical in acknowledging their unique needs, wants, and desires, and helping to facilitate a life of dignity for young people. The Church can assist by motivating young people to realize their potential as equal children of God. In partnership with the development organizations programmes can be designed to encourage youth to appreciate their inherent capacities to contribute to society in meaningful and fulfilling ways.

Discussion

Participants discussed the phenomenon of the "brain drain" as a negative consequence of migration the home countries. They also pointed out that rural to urban migration represents a major challenge for FBOs work, as it is primarily the result of young people leaving their homes

in search of better opportunities and further education. A number of participants suggested that FBOs initiate some form of pre-migration advice to be made available to young people before they move.

Forum participants further agreed on the need for greater advocacy to combat the criminalization of migration. Participants also suggested cooperating to produce a database on migration, not only to examine the migration trends, but also to assess the impact of FBO interventions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Together with UNFPA, FBOs should liaise with the media on rural-urban awareness-raising campaigns about migrants rights to education, health-care and social inclusion.
- Governments should support local FBOs to develop equal opportunities to access health care in rural areas, as well as access to education (particularly secondary education) in light of high levels of adolescent drop outs rates.
- UNFPA should work with governments and other civil society counterparts to support FBOs in the development of a methodology to redress the problems experienced by migrants, and produce research analyzing the relationship between migration and religious activism.
- UNFPA and civil society organizations need to work together to protect migrant rights, including the right to education, employment and healthcare.
- UNFPA can assist concerned FBOs to set up a database on their specific contributions and roles with regards to migration globally, and assessments of this role scientifically.

V – Panel III: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

Violence Against Women (VAW) is not confined to a particular culture, class, region or religion. Nevertheless, the priority given to combat and eliminate VAW in respective countries and communities around the world varies. Much depends on the extent to which violence is viewed as a systemic social problem. In some societies, the beating of wives or loved ones is understood as a sign of passion and/or love, and even within such context, there are many groups which mobilize against these injustices.

Forum participants agreed on the need for further awareness-raising campaigns on forms and incidences of violence against women in local communities, and the impact on women, families, and society as a whole. Advocacy campaigns built on this evidence should focus on and involve men, to bring them to a point of better understanding about VAW, and empower them as agents of positive change against the phenomenon. Furthermore, a diverse set of programmes should be offered to men on stress and anger management in culturally appropriate settings, and through the support of both the UN and FBOs.

Forum participants further concurred on the need to view VAW as a public health issue. There was also a call for greater government involvement in instituting non-ambiguous laws to empower women and criminalize all forms of violence against them, in line with international conventions.



“L-R: Fatou Diop, H.E. Nawal Faouri, Aminata Toure, Rev. Blanca Armand Pilon, Anastasiya Kryvitskaya, Sister Ngozi Uti, Mualana Abdul Kalam Azad.”

The case of Senegal

Fatou Diop, *Islamic Association on Population and Development*

The word violence does not exist in Islamic texts. In fact, it is a concept of *jahiliya*, the time of ignorance prior to the revelation of Islam. Allah says: when you are a true believer you will find within yourself the sources of peace – and no violence. This is true for Muslims all around the world, at all times.

“It is not enough to ‘have faith’. We must work constantly towards good behaviour. Islam gives us a path for practical action.”

Fatou Diop

The Prophet Muhammad says: if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. The family is a cell, therefore if a woman suffers, the whole cell suffers. Women are the backbone of the family. The relationship between women and men is clear in Islam: women should be treated fairly, and not mistreated in any capacity. Islam enshrines women as human beings in full dignity

and respect. There is no room in Islam for hatred or exploitation.

So why are women subject to violence, and even death? This is forbidden by God. A man asked the Prophet “what should I do with my spouse?”, and the Prophet replied, “You should feed her, clothe her, and treat her well.” Anything else would be an act of violence. Yet women are sometimes victims of serious ill treatment. We must return to the roots of Islam to treat women with fairness, respect, and dignity, and reject negative teachings. When women are mistreated, we tear up the nobility of the Islamic faith, and to do so, is to tear up society itself.

The case of Jordan

H.E. Nawal Faouri

UNFPA has provided us with evidence that coming together as a network of religious leaders and FBOs is the best method to develop solutions for the problems affecting our communities. In this particular case I am speaking of human security – specifically that of women. Women actively contribute to the wellbeing of local communities, carrying the bulk of labour associated with the security of the family. As religious leaders, we in turn have a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of women. It is my hope that the UNFPA Global Forum meeting will lead us towards a long-term, sustainable, and strategic network to work towards women’s empowerment and combat violence against women, with clear steps to adjust and modify as we go along.

Allah says: “I have made you a nation of equals, with no extremes; follow the path of Allah.”

The social and economic empowerment of women is critical for them to live in society as equals to men. Islam looks at women as human beings with full and equal rights in dignity and respect. All forms of violence – physical, psychological, economic, domestic, sexual – are violations of

our human rights, and therefore directly contradict the teachings of Islam. It is important to understand the seriousness of violence against women, and that it deserves due attention. It is critical that the scope and depth of the problem are properly understood at the individual and societal level.

This takes time, effort, and mobilization of resources on behalf of all actors – faith-based, government, and non-governmental actors. In Jordan, we gathered statistics on the forms and incidences of violence against women, and the results indicated low perpetration. However, we were very cautious not to take these results at face value. A wall of silence has been built around the reality of violence against women in Jordan. It remains a taboo subject, and women fear reporting abuse to the authorities. Yet in Jordan we are on the right track to redressing this situation. We have created special government departments, and we have been very active in introducing new legislation and national instruments to ward against violence and enhance women’s status. These measures include the National Office for Women’s Affairs, the National Council for Family Affairs, a programme for family reconciliation, and a special liaison person who investigates and reports to the government on issues of violence against women. In addition, we have initiated gender-sensitization programmes, many of which specifically target men to include them as agents of positive change.

We are not yet at the level and quality of service that we aim for, yet we are on the right track, and have official governmental interest and support. An international interfaith network, facilitated by UNFPA, would help us to enhance and further our efforts to combat violence against women and work for women’s empowerment.

The case of Bangladesh

Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Masjid Council for Community Advancement (MACCA)*

The Masjid Council for Community Advancement – MACCA – works with other faith-based organisations to generate interfaith action on pressing social issues in Bangladesh. In fact, we played a role in forming the Council for Interfaith Harmony. The Council brings together representatives of the different faiths in Bangladesh – Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists – to promote humane and moral values in wider society.

The formation of the Interfaith Council was crucial, as Bangladesh is a small country, and comprises many religions, as well as secular entities. We wanted to form a means for communication between faith-based groups, and secular governmental and non-governmental organisations. The Interfaith Council brings together these various entities on a regular basis, to discuss the most urgent development issues facing Bangladeshi society. Our dialogue has led to a fundamental realization: the problems and tensions amongst faith-based workers and secular entities in Bangladesh are based on misinformation, misunderstandings, and miscommunication.

Yet through our persistence to work synergistically to achieve better results, we have reached a consensus on development issues. MACCA has led consultations with religious leaders on key development issues, who have in turn initiated numerous advocacy campaigns on women's empowerment, and to combat violence against women. We also have a pool of trained Imams – 5000 in total – who work specifically on reproductive health, and HIV and AIDS.

MACCA is now in a position of great trust in the eyes of governmental, non-governmental, religious, and secular groups. We have the capacity to convene all religious leaders, FBOs, and secular development workers in one place to move forward on common goals of population and development.

The case of Belarus

Anastasiya Krivitskaya, *Christian Social Service*

“As the women washed the clothes of their fellow townfolk, they washed away the stigma attached to being victims of the sex-trade.”

Anastasiya Krivitskaya

The Christian Church is well represented in Belarus. There are some 136 dioceses, 28,000 parishes, and 700 monasteries, distributed throughout Belarus and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Christian Social Service is an organisation based on inter-confessional Christian stewardship, which brings together many Christian groups in and around Belarus, to work together on key development issues.

Local FBOs have long-standing relationships and cooperative efforts with international development organisations, including UNAIDS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). As an FBO, Christian Social Service offer something unique in adding to the work of various United Nations agencies, especially since many secular groups do not enjoy the same level of support that we, as a faith-based group, do in Belarusian society.

I want to focus on human trafficking of women, which is a significant problem in the Eastern European countries. Several hundred thousand women are trafficked every year, and many women are sold in the sex trade. The Church is in a unique position to lend its services to women who have been victims of human trafficking. First and foremost, we need to create spheres of prevention: awareness-raising campaigns, publications for common distribution, and media programmes. The initiatives of Christian Social Service include maintaining a strong presence on the internet, which provides a valuable avenue for information and communication with a key constituency in our target audience – the youth population.

One of the most successful projects of Christian Social Service was to help women victims of the sex-trade regain the trust and respect of their community after being trafficked. Our organisation helped the women establish a small laundry service in their town. In addition to the regular laundry, the women provided free laundry services to the elderly, and the homeless. Due to the combined efforts of the church and the women, they managed to regain

the trust of the community. As they washed the clothes of their fellow townfolk, they washed away the stigma attached to being victims of trafficking and the sex –trade.

We need to learn how to function as an organisation, so therefore we need to learn how to maintain our offices. Our priests are over burdened and our church though it understands its religious role, it lacks knowledge and understanding in terms of running a service organisation. We need to learn how to be a better functioning FBO, in the form of administrative trainings etc., so that we can better serve the public.

The case of Uruguay

Reverend Blanca Armand Pilon, *Voz de la Mujer*



Violence against women is widespread in Uruguay. On a daily basis, thousands of women are subject to both physical and psychological abuse. As a religious leader, I wanted to do something about the situation of women in my country, so I chose to undertake a training course in Italy. The course was based on learning to most effectively employ teachings of the Christian faith for practical use in today's society. Like all the world's faiths, the true teachings of Christianity are based on equality between men and women, and complete respect and dignity for every man, woman, and child.

Usually, leaders of the Church in Uruguay do not broach the issue of violence against women. Yet following the formal technical training I received, I led my Church to deliver services to the women in our local community. This has been a difficult and complex task. One must keep in mind that in Uruguay, we are living under a dictatorship.

"The psychology of dictatorship not only characterizes those in positions of power – it has found its way into people's homes. Male dominance, power, and abuse of power, are widely accepted as 'the norm'."

Rev. Blanca Armond Pilon

Some perpetrators think that beating their wives is a sign of love – a sign of protection, and a demonstration of their ‘passion’ for their wives. But acts of violence are about power and control – what perpetrators want is power, and control. Therefore, the Church had to be courageous to combat violence against women. We had to open our doors, and step out of our traditional roles.

In the beginning we were criticized, and we had to work hard for what we believe are women’s most basic human rights to be free of all forms of violence. Women in Uruguay have had enough of gender dictatorship. The psychology of dictatorship not only characterises those in positions of power – it has found its way into people’s homes. Male dominance, power, and abuse of power, is widely accepted as ‘the norm.’ We found new ways to deal with an old problem. We developed capacity-building programmes for female youth and adolescents, to empower them to know their rights and lead lives free of violence. No one can claim that violence against women is a private issue. It is a public health issue, and like any health issue, it needs to be dealt with systematically and collectively by a range of stakeholders. That is why the Church must be involved in dealing with the problem.

Violence does not discriminate between religions, and nor does violence distinguish between class. Violence against women is a form of torture, and a gross violation of human rights. Research in Uruguay reveals that many cases of abortion follow acts of sexual violence and abuse. In fact, statistics indicate that 30 percent of women in Uruguay have experienced some form of violence – out of a total population of three million, this is a significant number.

In order to bring about change, we need to band together, as a social solidarity movement. We need to collaborate to implement effective and sustainable projects to combat violence against women, and this is why partnerships between UNFPA, other development agencies, and faith-based organisations are of great value – they are part of efforts to smash the walls that keep us separate, and prevent us from achieving our development goals.

The values that we are talking about can be shared – they are alive across all religions and faiths. Love is the basis of our beliefs, and this also should be at the core of our actions. We need to work for society, and so we must place theology aside. We need to focus our efforts on what we wish to achieve in the field, not just in abstraction.

Discussion

Forum participants agreed on the urgent need for increased joint work in the area of prevention of violence against women. This led to a call for stakeholders to move beyond focusing on legal aspects of women’s status, and move towards working with local communities at the grassroots level, to impact and transform both men’s and women’s attitudes that perpetuate violence against women. In this respect, FBOs and religious leaders have an important role to play in utilising their unique position as path-makers of societal values, beliefs, and attitudes.

To illustrate the approach advocated, Fulya Vekiloglu shared experiences of the Bahai community in combating violence against women by holding classes for youth and children “to develop their moral reasoning, and to give them opportunities to put learning into practice in their everyday lives. We have to start from the ground up,” she asserted.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNFPA should liaise with governments to support financing for programmes which bring together FBOs and secular CSOs to directly tackle VAW.
- FBO initiatives to combat VAW should include programmes that target men in terms of gender-sensitization, anger management, and violent practices.
- UNFPA should support FBOs in the development of training courses for community members, and consultative programmes with religious leaders working in the area of violence against women.
- UNFPA should provide greater awareness raising and advocacy, as well as capacity building, such as increased training programmes for FBOs dealing with the issue of human trafficking, particularly in terms of the deliverance of counseling services and community reintegration.

VI – Panel IV: EMERGENCIES AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

In times of crisis and natural disasters, the challenges facing FBOs and religious leaders as they work on population and development issues increase exponentially. People become more vulnerable to infection with HIV and AIDS, violence against women intensifies, migration rates increase, and the risk of being victim to human trafficking rises. Those most at risk in all these scenarios are women and children.

These problems are exacerbated by the fact that many FBOs do not have equal access to resources as government and secular development organisations. Furthermore, FBOs are not yet systematically included in the development, implementation, and monitoring of disaster response mechanisms.

In addition, there is need for greater synergy in the responses of FBOs, NGOs, government, police, and military bodies. Forum participants also agreed on the vital need for emergency personnel to be aware of and sensitive to the cultural values, social norms, and the needs of local women in particular in emergencies and humanitarian settings.



“L-R: Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Rev. Ignace Singirankabo, Asanga Tilakaratne, R.P. Rafael Castillo, Saleh Saeed, Fr. Octavian Mosin.”

The case of Rwanda

Ignace Singirankabo, Network of Religious Confessions

I am here to speak to you about the experiences of faith-based organisations in Rwanda. Rwanda is a small country, yet the people are diverse in terms of both religion and ethnicity. The country comprises practicing Muslims and Christians, including Catholics, Protestants, and

Adventists. Like many other African countries, Rwanda has had its share of natural disasters – especially drought and resulting famine – as well as political upheaval due to ethnic conflict and post-election violence, including the genocide of nearly one million people in just three and a half months. In addition to those murdered during the genocide, hundreds of thousands migrated; hundreds of women were raped, and this resulted in an increase in HIV and AIDS and other STIs.

In this context, faith-based organisations in Rwanda have played an important role in health, especially in times of disaster and conflict. In fact, FBOs are working to help people gain better access to resources, water, and food, and combat conditions of poverty – especially for children and orphans. The Network of Religious Confessions works in the thematic areas as peace and reconciliation, maternal health, and HIV and AIDS. Through the Network of Religious Confessions, Muslim and Christian organisations have been working together on HIV and AIDS. We use the Holy Books of Islam and Christianity to reveal the common thread of human dignity, and combat stigma and discrimination attached to HIV and AIDS in Rwanda. We are creating religiously sensitive educational materials for those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS, with a focus on care and support.

“Over 40 percent of the country’s health facilities are run by religious groups. FBOs and NGOs are working together with the people to find local solutions to local problems.”

Rev. Ignace Singirankabo

FBOs give support to vulnerable people at all times, and especially during disasters and conflict. FBOs – local, regional, and global – have been longstanding partners with other development agencies in humanitarian and emergency relief efforts. It is therefore imperative that the various United Nations agencies, such as UNFPA, continue their efforts to help create the space to bring about widespread, sustainable change.

The case of the Palestinian Authority

Sheikh Tayseer Tamini, *Grand Judge of Islamic Courts*

In Palestine, we are at the beginning of developing strategic plans for faith-based organisations to engage work in the field of emergencies and humanitarian settings. In this work, we need to stress the crucial role of women, and the importance of the family. If emergency and humanitarian plans take these aspects into account, we will be better placed to manage family planning and maternal health issues in the long term.

“Emergency and humanitarian plans must take into account the crucial role of women.”

Sheikh Tayseer Tamini

There is intense desire amongst the Palestinian population to work towards a better life. Without a doubt there is a need for constructive dialogue, but this is difficult to promote when the people

are faced by barriers such as military occupation, confiscation of land and property on a daily basis, the separation wall, and checkpoints. Life in Palestine is therefore very difficult, in particular the West Bank. Palestinian people are prevented from moving freely; women have given birth at checkpoints; and those in need of urgent medical attention often do not reach the hospitals in time. Incidences of miscarriage are high, due to the constant duress of the military occupation. Men, women, and children are dying because of embargoes.

In Palestine there is a correlation between the occupation, and family breakdown. In response to the growing number of divorces, we have established a fund for divorced families. We have also established a preventative measures through family reconciliation programmes. Our solutions stem from our faith in Islam.

The case of Sri Lanka

Asanga Tilakaratne, *Damrivi Foundation*

The Damrivi Foundation is a network of Buddhist academics. Integrating Buddhist insight into development planning has been our aim, and our skill. The services of the Damrivi Foundation are available to all – irrespective of class, creed, or religion.

Our belief is that in order to bring about effective change, men and women, young and old, need to be educated about the most urgent issues facing their communities. The Damrivi Foundation has developed education and counseling courses for people on issues of population and development.

When the disaster of the tsunami hit Sri Lanka in 2007, the Damrivi Foundation had already trained hundreds of people to assist the community in dealing with the ensuing problems and work with the wider community to help them restore their wellbeing. We also offered culturally sensitive training to medical professionals from outside the country, as they were often the first people on the scene of crises.

In our past experiences in emergencies and humanitarian settings, we witnessed people merely waiting for handouts being provided by aid agencies. This formed a cycle of dependency that we wished to break. At the Foundation, we found meditation to be an effective tool to help people maintain stability and sustain their resourcefulness, rather than waiting on handouts.

We conducted a number of projects to assist people in the aftermath of the tsunami, and realized that we were well placed to work with the government, police and military in developing sensitization programmes for their personnel. In addition, the Foundation emphasized the provision of psychological support for the elderly, as they are an extremely vulnerable group within society during disasters.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to address UNFPA, and emphasise the importance that FBO partners receive equal attention in development and population planning as the UN's non-faith-based partners.

The case of Colombia

R.P Rafael Castillo, Fundación Red Desarrollo y Paz de los Montes de María

Colombia represents a complex and difficult environment to work in with regards to population and development issues. We are a community in crisis and conflict, and the people live under harsh conditions.

In saying that, I would like to draw your attention to the humanitarian assistance at the core of our work as an FBO. The conflict presents us with many challenges, such as working with the internally displaced peoples (IDP) and issues of security, mental health, and low levels of education. The most profound difficulty is the inability to provide services to those in need, which exacerbates problems like rising mental illnesses, and illiteracy. In the face of these problems, our organisation entered into a partnership with the Ministry of Education to combat discrimination against women. Our partnership was born out of our common convictions in human dignity, social justice, and equality.

Justice is an integral component of any successful society, yet in most societies around the world the full sense of what we mean by the term 'justice' is not experienced by everyone. Because the conflict and the ensuing problems are so severe in Colombia, the people are scared. We need to develop an approach to the conflict that brings together government and civil society, so that we can build a foundation for a resolution to our problems. This is necessary to form a functioning democracy.

We need to have sovereignty in Colombia. There is a strong will to create an environment in which transformation can take place. The transformation people need and want includes changing the quality of society, improving the overall basic quality of life, and in particular improving the rights of the labour force. In Colombia, there is a need to establish a dialogue between the parties in conflict. At the centre of this dialogue should be issues of fundamental human rights. The development of a rights-based ethics in Colombia will motivate society at the grassroots level, and move us towards a more viable and sustainable peace.

The year 2006 witnessed some progress in Colombia. A number of representatives of faith-based organisations, including myself, sat in on a dialogue with other stakeholders from all over the country. The meeting injected me with a renewed sense of hope that together, we can achieve peace. It is important that we continue to talk to one another. Yet we must also move beyond talk and act together in partnership to bring about change, because peace will not be achieved through the actions of one party alone.

The case of Moldova

Father Octavian Mosin, Metropolis Press Secretary

Moldova is located in South Eastern Europe. It is 34,000 square kilometers in size, and has a population of 4 million people. It is one of the poorest countries in Europe, with an economy based on agriculture and money sent home from our emigrant population. Recent years have witnessed a significant reduction in the population, due to low fertility rates and an aging population.

“The religious leaders were not removed from the people – they were on the ground, helping those most affected by the crisis face-to-face.”

Fr. Octavian Mosin

An overdependence on agriculture has had catastrophic effects in Moldova. In 2007, we experienced one of the worst droughts in the history of the country, causing an estimated one billion dollars worth of damage. In collaboration with UNFPA, the government initiated an action plan to distribute new seeds purchases to drought-affected areas. In addition, special emergency packs were distributed to nursing mothers and women in general, providing them with extra nutrition and hygiene needs. Religious leaders played a large role in assisting the community to implement this initiative. Importantly, the religious figures did not act in a capacity removed from the people – rather, they were on the ground, helping those most affected by the crisis door-to-door, face-to-face.

The 2007 drought was followed by another disaster in the form of large-scale floods. The flooding caused significant damage to fields and crops, and destruction of roads and infrastructure. Through partnership with UNFPA, we were able to respond to the ongoing crisis. UNFPA joined forces with local mobile telecommunications operators, and raised funds to help the local population in working to overcome the crisis.

With these kinds of examples of successful partnerships and the ongoing work of faith-based organisations on population and development issues, we need to move towards building an interfaith network, through the development of training programmes for FBOs, including on how to distribute humanitarian aid most efficiently and effectively. We are all moral agents, and so we should all be uniting in force.

“We are all moral agents, and so we should all be uniting in force.”

Fr. Octavian Mosin

Discussion

Forum participants discussed the importance of holistic support for members of communities in humanitarian crises. Asanga Tilakaratne of the Damrivi Foundation emphasised the importance of coupling material support with psychological and spiritual support. “We have found that

those people who have a strong spiritual base before disaster strikes,” he stated, “are better able to cope with the hardships that follow.”

The panel proceeded to further emphasize the value-added of FBOs and religious leaders due to their being involved on the ground – not just in leadership roles but in equal partnership with the people.

Participants also agreed that issues such as HIV and AIDS, reproductive health, and violence against women must be treated as priorities in emergencies and humanitarian settings. It was also stressed that FBOs are well placed to monitor and reports on those issues, particularly in the context of disasters, where other actors may have less access to the communities in question. Furthermore, Forum participants agreed on the crucial need to prioritize the role and agency of women in emergencies and redress their lack of inclusion in conflict resolution and peace negotiations.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- UNFPA should give faith-based actors equal recognition and access to resources as non-faith-based partners especially in the context of emergencies and humanitarian settings.
- UNFPA should further examine and take into account, in planning and implementation, the key role of FBOs in developing, implementing, and monitoring disaster response mechanisms.
- FBOs should focus on developing stronger interfaith partnerships in local settings to deal with emergencies and humanitarian crises.
- UNFPA should work with FBOs, building on their unique outreach and capabilities, to provide sensitization training to government, police, and military bodies, especially in the context and aftermath of emergencies and humanitarian crisis.

VII – Panel V: COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES OF UNITED NATIONS ENGAGEMENT WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

The Case of UNAIDS

Sally Smith

UNAIDS represents a partnership of a number of United Nations agencies, and the coordinating body of this partnership is the United Nations Secretariat. UNAIDS works in areas of advocacy, private sector partnerships, civil society partnerships, and resource mobilisation. UNAIDS brings together secular development actors from within the United Nations with faith-based organisations and religious leaders working on HIV and AIDS. Just as we cannot take one person's religious beliefs and think that we understand



L-R: Yamina Djacta, Sally Smith, Rosa Guerreiro, Stephen Hanmer, Khadija Moalla, Alex Ross, Pierre Martinot-Lagarde, Marc-Andre Dorel, Segolene Adam.

that religion in its entirety, at UNAIDS we believe it is inappropriate for one person to give advice and formulate policy on HIV and AIDS. “We do not ask the question of how UNAIDS relates to Islam, Christianity, or other faiths on a grand level, yet we want to know how we can relate to religion as it influences and interacts in peoples everyday lives at the grass roots.”

The case of UNESCO

Rosa Guerreiro

In 1995 the United Nations Education, Social, and Cultural Organisation started an interfaith dialogue between Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and this has since extended into a dialogue between believers and non-believers. In partnership and consultation with those we reached out to, UNESCO initiated a number of pilot projects, including the Abuja panel on HIV and AIDS, a seminar on women in Tajikistan, preservation of historical sites, and peace-building in conflict settings.

It is important that we continue to create structures of reciprocal knowledge, such as the UNESCO Chair on Culture, located in different countries around the world. UNESCO needs to further collect and examine concrete examples of successful partnerships with faith-based organisations. We continue the process of real interaction between secular development actors, FBOs, and RLs, so that we can all benefit from a common exercises in planning and implementation.

The case of UNICEF

Stephen Hanmer

Mr Hanmer recently joined UNICEF to work as their liaison person with faith-based organisations, given that FBOs have an extensive network around the world: five billion people form the religious community. FBOs are at the frontline to respond to the needs of children. UNICEF has a long history of working with faith-based organisations from all regions of the world where they have assisted in places such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia. We have produced a number of joint publications on HIV and AIDs in collaboration with local-level FBOs.

Mr Hanmer emphasised the importance of two-way dialogue. Whilst United Nations actors might be well placed to impart technical knowledge and capacity building, it is vital that they hear from and listen to faith-based actors. “At UNICEF, we want to continue the process or learning from you as faith-based actors – your experiences and perspectives in working on the most urgent issues facing children, mothers, and all members of your communities. It is only through partnership and working together that we see a way of moving forward with our mandate at UNICEF.”

The case of UNDP

Khajida Moalla

UNDP recognizes the centrality of religion and religious beliefs to people’s everyday lives in diverse communities around the world. This recognition led them to develop the organisation CHAHAMA – Arabic for “courage to intervene” in the Arab region. CHAHAMA incorporates two of the world’s major religions – Christianity and Islam – and is based on the common values that tie these religions together in humanitarianism and human dignity.

Through CHAHAMA, UNDP has trained thousands of Christian and Muslim faith-based actors at the grassroots level. One of our training courses is on HIV and AIDS, and aims to increase knowledge about how the disease is contracted and transmitted, as well as have a positive impact and influence on attitudes and perceptions surrounding the disease.

UNDP works to reduce stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV and AIDS. There is a difference between stigma and discrimination. The media can work on stigma, through

awareness-raising campaigns and by educating people through the news. Yet to eliminate discrimination requires governments to set in place and enforce clear, non-ambiguous laws. “Therefore, we work on multiple levels with multiple stakeholders – FBOs, NGOs, and government.”

The case of the World Health Organisation

Alex Ross

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. The areas of work covered by the WHO mandate include all forms of disease, the impact of climate change, reproductive health, and many more. In its work in these areas, WHO has been engaging with faith-based organisations for more than sixty years.

Faith-based organisations provide 40 percent of health care in developing countries. They offer a wide range of treatment, care, and prevention services, and they are uniquely positioned to couple this with social development and spiritual support.

“Over the years, we have realized the importance of language in our partnerships with FBOs. Engagement and collaboration between faith-based actors and secular development workers requires the development of common language and terms of reference, so that both parties are able to understand clearly each other’s aims and objectives. “

The case of the International Labour Organisation

Pierre Martinot-Lagarde

The mandate of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has been restated to work for global justice and fairness. ILO works to improve levels and conditions of employment, and enhance dialogue between stakeholders. “I am the special advisor to the ILO on religious affairs. My vocation is that of a religious leader, as I was trained as a Jesuit priest, and this has been the tradition of my post at WHO since its inception.”

In efforts to expand its focus, ILO has developed the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC), and ILO-AIDS. In the development and implementation of the programmes, ILO has consistently invited FBOs for consultation at the international level. However, the FBOs we engaged with need to be a registered IFBO (International Faith-based Organisation), or directly affiliated with one.

Over half of the non-trade union members of the ILO are faith-based organisations. In 2002, we started a special dialogue to reflect on the role of values, beliefs systems, faith, and religion in our work. We plan to reopen and reinvigorate this dialogue to address rising injustice around the world.

The case of DESA

Marc-Andre Dorel

The issue of interfaith and inter-religious dialogue and strategies for action question is now a priority issue on the agenda of development agencies, which is a good thing. Today we are working towards a culture of peace in partnership and collaboration, which is an indication of a positive change. The United Nations is heavily involved in this line of work, and Member States have collectively agreed to work on the issue of inter-religious dialogue.

Yet as an organisation, the United Nations has a long history of working closely with secular organisations at the international, regional, and national levels. Last year during the General Assembly, civil society organisations were invited to take the floor to express their views and experiences on working with UN agencies. “Following this dialogue, we at DESA realized the urgent need to recompose the established codes of partnership into a more culturally-sensitive context. This includes recognition of, and incorporation of religious-based actors – their experiences, perceptions, values, and objectives.”

The case of UN-Habitat

Yamina Djacta

UN-Habitat is the lead agency for the Millennium Development Goal targets on water, sanitation and slum upgrading, and national offices are focal points for local authorities. In addition, UN-Habitat works for the empowerment of women, and advocates for equal land and property rights between men and women.

Faith-based organisations have for a long time been involved in capacity building, provision of basic services, and slum upgrading. UN-Habitat recognizes the extensive role and unique position of faith-based actors in these areas, and we have partnered with FBOs such as the Mary Knoll Sisters, and the Agha Khan Foundation. For example, one of our projects dealt with Islam and property, highlighting references in the Holy Quran to improve property rights for women.

In the past decade, faith-based organisations have increased their presence in the development field. “We should follow their efforts by creating stronger partnerships with them, so that their work can be supported and sustained.”

Discussion

Working with FBOs is not new. Collectively, United Nations agencies have well 60 years of experience in partnerships and collaboration. Yet there is a great need for UN bodies to reignite the relationships shared with FBOs over the years, and to engage in a new round of “dialogue in action”. In strengthening partnerships with FBOs, United Nations bodies should focus on faith-based actors engaged at the grassroots level. United Nations agencies were

encouraged by participants to should further examine ways to coordinate the various FBO relationships more systematically and fluidly. The creation of networks, building bridges between faith-based organizations and secular NGOs working towards similar objectives; and advocating with governments to ensure that FBOs were at the table during planning, implementation and evaluation were all reiterated.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Together, UNFPA and UN agencies should support the creation of a structured commitment to dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning with their partner FBOs.
- FBOs need support to work on developing sustainable partnerships and continued engagement with other UN stakeholders, secular civil society organisations, governments, and other international development organisations.
- The United Nations should systematize its outreach and engagement with FBOs since the multiplicity of UN organizations and structures can be confusing for FBOs.

VIII – Panel VI: SHARING GLOBAL CONSENSUS ON INTERFAITH NETWORKING WITH UNFPA



“L-R: Jowaad Kezaala, Dr. Hany El-Banna, Sidiki Coulibaly, Rev. Pastor Pax Tan, Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Most Ven. Khambo Lama Dambajav, Sara Morello.”

Several long standing FBO partners of UNFPA were asked from the first day to sit in on the different regional meetings taking place outside of the panels, during meals and intervals. Their task was to listen to what the FBOs were voicing as needs and ways forward and to assess how the discussions on the fringes, tied in to what was articulated at the central panels. The five partners themselves represented different faiths and different regions. They were asked to convene at the very end and share with the entire group, the results and points of consensus they had listened to and arrived at. Below is a broad analysis and the narration of the consensus in their own words.

Dr. Hany El-Banna, Arab States

Enough is enough giving speeches in mosques and churches. Now is the time for religious leaders and faith-based organisations to act collectively for the common good. The time is upon us to actualise our ideas and ambitions about an Interfaith Network on Population and Development. We must be a network of humanitarians.

In many ways and for many people, religion and faith are still something of taboo topics. Yet together, religious leaders and FBOs can work for a new understanding of humanity. As religious leaders, and representatives of FBOs we should give our full endorsement to the founding of an Interfaith Network on Population and Development. This is a historical event. We are representatives of faiths from all over the world. We represent the people, and bring this clear and transparent agenda to meetings and conferences. In our capacity as faith-based agents, we are of great value to any institution.

The world has been waiting for the establishment of a global Interfaith Network to combat the most urgent challenges facing humankind, and deliver much needed services to its constituents. So let us make the effort now to build on this Network, and in doing so build the future leadership on population and development issues. Humanity is not merely waiting to hear about our beliefs; humanity is waiting to see the results of our actions. This is a chance not to be missed. As we work to develop the UNFPA Interfaith Network on Population and Development, we can continue to dream for the future the establishment of UNFBP – the United Nations Faith Based Programme.

“Humanity is not merely waiting to hear about our beliefs. Humanity is waiting to see the results of our actions.”

Dr. Hany El-Banna

Jowaad Kezaala, Africa

Together, faith-based organisations need to institutionalise the approach they are taking on population and development. We need to collectively affirm our philosophy on the most urgent issues facing humanity.

“The creation of a Global Interfaith Network presents us with a profound and exciting opportunity to move forward.”

Jowaad Kezaala

One of the serious problems facing Africa in terms of FBO representation and participation is that we are fragmented. There is no cohesive approach to our work, and we lack the value of partnerships. Faith-based organisations need to work for sustainable change, and the only way to do this is to move away from tokenistic partnerships towards concrete cooperation and alliances. Now

more than ever we must start working with partners outside of our own locality, to develop relations on an Africa-wide basis. As FBOs, we need to work both vertically and horizontally, and we need to augment regional partnerships. We need to stop competing for resources, and start sharing our resources. We need to work harder to identify our partners in population and development, and create meaningful alliances around the issues we have discussed at this Forum.

In a globalised world, it is important that we have a strong network.

Reverend Pax Tan, Asia and the Pacific

If we had not gathered over the past two days in Istanbul, and at the regional forums in the lead up to this event, would our work at home be better for it? For me, the answer to that question is no. Through the UNFPA Forums of Faith-based Organisations on Population and Development, we have been empowered and emboldened; we have learned how to ‘cross the line.’

Yet there is an ongoing need to see more examples of FBO partnerships on critical issues. We must be brave in confronting our problems, and this is what the UNFPA meetings are all about: becoming more confident as faith-based leaders to *lead*. We hope that we can rise to the challenge; in fact we are already doing so. But we must now upgrade our efforts and break the barriers, and we must use our faith to do this.

“When the AIDS pandemic hit in the 1980s, I did not know what to do. I did not call the Ghostbusters. I reached out to the gay community.”

Rev. Pax Tan

But simply having faith is not enough. Let me give you an example. I am priest, passionate in my theological beliefs and I work on a theological basis. Yet when the HIV and AIDS pandemic struck in the 1980s, I did not know what to do with the virus. So who did I call? I did not call the Ghostbusters. I reached out to the gay community. They were the people dealing most directly with the issues, and they were best equipped to offer advice and strategies for effective action.

We cannot respond to problems such as HIV and AIDS without knowledge. We need to hear the stories of the people. To hear the floor creek, press your ear against the ground. That is exactly what I did.

We have to take the messages we have received here at the Global Forum back to those within our FBO communities – especially those who are not yet convinced of the value in working on population and development issues in partnership with UNFPA. My organisation is in strong support of the formation of the Global Interfaith Network. Yet we need more support to continue to do concrete work. We need to recognize each other as forming a common support base. If we act together through the Interfaith Network, we are all a trigger to kick start new and better ways of dealing with urgent problems. We must continue this process of sharing our experience.

“We need to recognize each other as forming a common support base. If we act together through the Interfaith Network, we are all a trigger to kick start new and better ways of dealing with urgent problems. We must continue this process of sharing our experience.”

Rev. Pax Tan

As faith-based organisations, in some cases our levels of knowledge are low compared to other development organisations. God forbid that as leaders of the faiths we may not know what is happening on the ground, amongst our people. The Interfaith Network is therefore important for us all. If we don't do it, who will?

Reverend Judith Van Osdol, *Latin America and Caribbean*

I would like to share with you a consensus document developed by the Latin America and Caribbean constituency, reached during the two days here in Istanbul, and gleaned from the Regional FBO Forum in Buenos Aires.

We are in support of a Global Faith-based Network, and sub-networks, with the understanding that other networks and FBOs may join. We should have full participation, so that we can investigate new solutions. The diversity of the Network is important, and to this we would like to celebrate the diversity of our region in Latin America and the Caribbean, to include indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, and peoples of our many language groups.

“We should have full participation, so that we can investigate new solutions. The diversity of the Network is important, and to this we would like to celebrate the diversity of our region in Latin America and the Caribbean, to include indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, and peoples of our many language groups.”

Rev. Judith Van Osdol

We would like to open a virtual space for our work, so as to invite and include participants from a long-distance. The virtual space should also be a place where we name the respective themes and issues from our regions, and establish a dialogue on these, so as to promote and exchange partnerships. The virtual space should enable information-sharing through the posting of instruments and declarations. And finally, the virtual space should be a place where we can exchange our theological reflections on the various thematic areas of our work in population and development.

The thematic areas that are of priority to Latin America and the Caribbean include responding to emergencies and humanitarian crisis, HIV and AIDS, and migration and trafficking. In addition to these issues, we need to focus on identifying and combating the various forms of violence affecting the region – gender violence (including femicide); structural violence, manifesting in conditions of poverty; symbolic violence through misuse of religion; and institutional violence. We call for gender equity and equality, gender justice, and sexual and reproductive health rights for every woman and girl.

In closing, I wish to extend my gratitude to UNFPA. Together, we need to develop a consensus that will look at the pace, methodology, and language of the Global Interfaith Network. In doing so, UNFPA should recognize the crucial role of FBOs as the prime determinants of the form and content of the consensus, with a pastoral emphasis. In addition, there is an ongoing and ever-increasing need for FBOs to receive technical assistance from UNFPA. Again, I am grateful for the vision and courage of UNFPA in their FBO initiatives. May we continue to move forward together in this journey of partnership.

Sara Morello, North America

“The problems we are facing do not know borders. We must also rise above the borders that have divided us in the past.”

Sara Morello

Catholics for Choice speaks out on issues such as sexual health and reproductive rights for women. We come from the Catholic tradition and recognize the moral basis of decision-making. We have a responsibility to act privately, publicly, and politically, for the rights of men and women. We support the Programme of Action of the ICPD, and the Millennium Development Goals.

Yet We understand that when faith and development policies intersect, certain challenges arise. But we must take up the challenge to achieve the equal dignity of women and men.

We have gathered in Istanbul to address ways that we can best meet the needs of those directly affected by HIV and AIDS, Violence Against Women, Maternal Mortality, and many other issues. These problems do not know borders. As we attempt to eliminate the problems, we must also rise above the borders that have divided us in the past. Each woman and man must be empowered to take charge of their life. We must set our differences aside in order to support the mission of UNFPA in population and development. As faith-based organisations, I hope we can continue to work together through common support for the Global Interfaith Network.

Venerable Khambo Lama Dambajav, Eastern Europe and Central Asia



As a representative of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, I state that we support the formation of the Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development. We are hopeful about the establishment of systematic inter-religious activities. We would like to collaborate in-depth with other FBOs to face economic, social, and historical realities. We need to develop realistic plans to solve the problems our communities are facing. We can do this through the Regional and Global Interfaith Networks, and through further strategic input from UNFPA.

Yet we must take into account the time factor in discussing these issues. The task of establishing and maintaining a Global Interfaith Network that is truly effective creates great responsibility, both for FBOs and for UNFPA.

“FBOs are different from secular organisations. We have a unique identity: we are guided by our love for the Almighty... we are committed to the necessity of helping all those in need. Yes we observe human rights, and we are committed to human values that can rid violence and discrimination from the world. “

Venerable Khambo Lama Dambajav

IX - THE ROAD FROM ISTANBUL: EXCERPTS FROM THE CLOSING STATEMENT BY UNFPA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After extending due thanks to the Government of Turkey, the gathered FBOs and religious leaders, UNFPA Turkey office, and the entire team of organizers of the Forum, Ms. Obaid proceeded to outline areas of consensus as well as ways forward, and stressed UNFPA's commitment.

Areas of Consensus

Listening to you, what did I hear? I have been listening very intently to all of you and so have my colleagues. I heard that we are using each other's language: FBO participants are increasingly talking about human rights, and the development agencies are increasingly talking about human dignity. Basically, we are all agreeing that human rights ensure human dignity.

I heard the agreement that there is energy in faith, and in working together to reach common ground. We have learned that the teachings of faith traditions can, and should, address root causes of the tragedies we face today and focus on prevention as the front line of defense. We agreed that we must make progress in the areas we have discussed in this meeting – to improve maternal health, promote the empowerment of women and gender equality, address HIV and AIDS and support all people affected by the disease, address the challenges faced by youth in general and within the context of migration in particular, end violence against women, and provide support to people affected by conflict and crisis.

We have heard that all that forms of harm towards all people are against the basic spirit of all faiths. Therefore, all the issues we discussed harm people and they are all components of one form of violence or another. They are against the basic spirit of all religions. It is our duty to join the energies of our faiths and our institutions to address these abuses of human rights with all our human and material resources.

As a principle, we should always ask ourselves: How do we see and interpret violence in all its manifestations. Would I accept to suffer? Would I want my wife, sister, or daughter to suffer? Would I want my adolescent children to suffer? If not, then each one of us should move with full commitment to end all forms of violence against any member in our communities, knowing that



women and children are the most vulnerable. They should get our full commitment and attention.

Many of your comments reached out to look for the common ground between us, as secular and religious actors for change. What we have all heard from each other is that although we come from different faiths, different regions and different experiences, we share much in common. We share the common values of compassion, tolerance, respect for differences, and a passion for improving the lives of the people we serve. Together we can push the borders to make a real difference.

We differ by necessity when we come to details because we come from different spaces. We have different definitions and interpretations. And we see political circumstances differently. We explain conflicts differently. But there is only one solution: Dialogue, Dialogue, Dialogue. We need dialogue to reach solutions that ensure the human rights of all and the dignity of all.

I heard you all say that religious leaders and FBOs should always be taken into account as part of the solution and not part of the problem. You can play a pivotal role in bringing peace with justice, because all faiths believe in peace, and always in justice.

Communities can always be mobilised to be bridges for peace, development, human dignity, and human rights.

Strategies for Actions

In listening to the panelists and the discussions that followed, we heard many recommendations on how an Interfaith Network can help to support our collective work.

In sharing your experiences, many of you have expressed the desire to continue to learn from others on our common areas of work, by focusing on the reality on the ground.

I also heard of the need for a safe space, virtual or real, where free discussions can take place on difficult issues – such as sexuality – so that we can move forward in supporting people looking for improved physical and mental health.

Many of you have also mentioned the need for scientific-based evidence, information, research, and technical support to build knowledge and capacity so that you can better support your constituencies, both in terms of the messages you deliver and the services you provide.

Many of you have also expressed the sentiment that to achieve concrete results, we must build bridges between religious leaders, political decision-makers, and secular civil society. FBOs have a role play to play in advocacy to promote the adoption of people-centered policies.

There were many suggestions that we must be inclusive and strategic in our work, and that we must work on two levels – with mainstream populations, and also with vulnerable and marginalised populations.

We must also include youth when we discuss the issues related to them. This particular goal will require commitment from all of us. I can promise you that UNFPA will include young people from faith-based organisations in our special youth programme. And perhaps the most important is that we cannot make further progress unless both young women and men are fully involved.

In humanitarian response, I heard that we must work for dialogue and we must advocate peace and justice. Humanitarian response is not charity. It is about the rights of the displaced and refugees. The responsibility to support them falls upon all of us. I also have heard that humanitarian response is not only about providing material needs, but also providing spiritual support.

Many of you have stressed that we need strong country and regional alliances to make the Global Interfaith Network effective.

Collectively, you concluded by expressing a clear desire to form an Interfaith Network on Population and Development, and to build on the linkages among us. To make this happen, I will ensure that we have focal points for the Network in our country and regional offices, to join the focal points we already have at Headquarters. The first steps for the establishment of the Global Network will be at the national and regional levels.

Looking further ahead, we can agree to meet again at the global level in 2010, to review the progress that has been made at the country and regional levels, and to set our programme for the following two years.

Moving Forward

I know that if we work in the spirit that filled this room, progress will be made. That spirit will ensure that all members of the Network at the national, regional and global levels are connected, and that they are treated as equal partners, coming together to find solutions through their respective beliefs and actions. The Network will be based on common goals, respectful of our differences, and tolerant of each others' points of view.

Finally, I want to say that we are honoured by your declarations of support and your commitment. We have gathered here in Istanbul to discuss common challenges and to reach common ground. That common ground is not how you can help UNFPA or how UNFPA can support you. It is about how we can work together to ensure that every birth is wanted, every pregnancy is safe, every young person is free of HIV, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

I hereby declare the inauguration of the Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development, a Network that will be inclusive of all faiths, ensuring ethnic and indigenous representation.

The Network is yours. You build it and sustain it by your commitment. It is yours and we, at UNFPA, will be with you to support your efforts. It will live and grow by your faiths and your energies.

I now invite religious leaders to bless our partnership, and the last blessing will bring the Global FBO Forum to a close.

X - BLESSING OF THE CONSENSUS BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Istanbul Consensus on the Principles of a Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development

The gathered representatives of UNFPA and FBOs from around the world are committed collectively:

- To the principle that faiths share the same aims to safeguard the dignity and human rights of all people, women and men, young and old;
- To work together to advance human well-being and realize the rights of all individuals with attention to women and young people;
- To identify regional and national FBO focal points;
- To exchange experiences and learn from each other, through the Interfaith Network;
- To ensure that FBOs partners own the principles of the Network and maintain linkages with each other, with the support of UNFPA;
- To continue to maintain strong regional and national networks supported by UNFPA country offices, feeding into a Global Network facilitated by Headquarters, as a working modality to realize the ICPD mandate.

Following the Executive Director's Closing Statement, Forum participants were graced with a multi-religious blessing. Religious leaders of the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Ba'hai faiths blessed the Forum and the establishment of the Interfaith Network on Population and Development. What follows is an overview of the religious blessings, as the written word could not capture the many forms of prayers and observances offered by the religious leaders.

Sheikh Mohamed Gemea

Al Azhar University, Egypt

I am so proud of the Executive Director and the distinguished officers of UNFPA, who have done such a wonderful job in organising this Forum. It is not an exaggeration to say that this is the best conference I have ever attended – and I have attended many conferences in my lifetime.

If you go outside, you will hear the birds, the animals, and even the trees, saying: we appreciate you. All faiths teach us that there is a close relationship between all forms of life. The most beloved people are the most useful to mankind, regardless of race, colour, or religion. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, you are a gift from Allah. He created you, and he ordered the angels in this universe to be under your service.

We pray to Allah to give you health and a long life.

Leonid Kishkovsky

World Conference of Religions for Peace

I am here as a representative of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. I would like to share with everyone an affirmation of our common principles of this Forum:

We come to the table of inter-religious cooperation in full integrity of our respective religion and traditions. We come to the table of inter-religious cooperation with respect for all faith and cultures. We come to the table not to negotiate doctrine, but to build mutual understanding and trust. We come to the table to seek ways to advance our colleagues and partners in FBOs and UNFPA, with honesty and good will.

The living contexts we work in are the religious communities. The world's religious communities form an extensive network, as they can be found in both capitals and the smallest villages. The religious community is a global alliance.

We bear witness to the readiness of the world's religions to seek common ground for peace, human security. We bear witness to the determination to eliminate all forms of violence.

Regional Faith-based Partnerships will affirm the value and necessity of partnerships amongst religious communities. In partnership with United Nations agencies, Religions for Peace is better equipped to face challenges. We therefore bless the establishment of the Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development.

We appreciate the vision and initiative of UNFPA in advancing collaboration with FBOs with respect to the UNFPA mandate on population and development. The journey will be a long one, and while on this journey we can find further and further areas of common ground, which will help us in our ongoing work for the common good.

Sheikh Tayseer Tamin

Palestinian Authority



The Prophet Muhammad believed in the message of Allah. For the times that we have not followed this message, we ask for forgiveness from humanity.

We must do right by the marginalised, and extend to them a hand of support. We must empower women in their full rights as dignified human beings. As faith leaders, we have much responsibility on our shoulders – the humanity of the world.

Father Paolos Serour

Orthodox Church of Egypt



God is the common denominator. We all turn to the same God.

Jesus says: Let us all be one.

We are working together regardless of all for the sake of salvation. We have a collective duty to look after one another. We need to act in earnest, and not turn a blind eye to HIV and AIDS, which is killing hundreds of thousands of people. The Lord instructs us to translate faith into action: 'show me your deeds'.

Bless this partnership between UNFPA and FBOs. Whatever our differences, the message of the Interfaith Network on Population and Development needs to be transmitted to more people and more faiths all around the world. We must continue our work to transcend differences, and think and act in a collective manner for the good of humankind.

Fulya Vekiloglu

Baha'i International Community

The Baha'i International Community is committed to the establishment of world peace and the oneness of humankind. I would like to share with you a prayer.

Oh my God, Oh my God,
Unite the hearts of thy servants,
Help them do good,
Lead them not to themselves,
Cheer their hearts.

Swami Mitranand

Chinmaya Mission, India

I would like to thank UNFPA for its fight against ignorance. Sometimes, we are ignorant about our own nature, and ignorant about our own scriptures. I would like to share a prayer with you, which is from an ancient Hindu hymn.

To a child woman is the first manifestation of God; your mother is God.

God leads us from fault to truth, from mortality to immortality.
There will be trust if we follow in this path, we must trust each other.
If trust is broken, it undermines all.

The fish in the ocean is a manifestation of God.
Human life is a manifestation of God.

Father Rafael Castillo

Fundación Red Desarrollo y Paz de los Montes de María, Colombia

With my whole heart I want to express my gratitude to UNFPA, and to the participants at this Faith-based Forum. I would like to share a prayer with you.

We will see where we are standing.

May all the partnerships be strong.

May all the people escape war and be strong.

May all illness disappear.

Do not put blocks in our way, but give us strength to serve humanity, and see that everyone is given what they need.

XI – CONCLUDING NOTES

The UNFPA Global Forum of Faith-based Organisations on Population and Development provided an excellent platform for UNFPA and FBO partners from around the globe to come together and share respective experiences in dealing with the most urgent and critical issues facing humankind.

Through partnership and collaboration, real progress is being made in communities all around the world on issues such as HIV and AIDS, Violence Against Women, and migration. Yet significant problems remain, due in many cases to social, political, or economic bulwarks to change.

The discussions that came to light at the Global Forum made clear the reality that *culture matters*, as well as the fact that there is some confusion between and misuse of the words ‘culture’ and ‘religion.’ Religion and systems of faith do not represent the overarching culture of a society *per se*, but rather form a crucial component of a more complex and multilayered system that comprises what we refer to with the term ‘culture.’ UNFPA engagement with faith-based organisations takes place in the broader context of work on culture, and the development of culturally-sensitive approaches to population and development. Such initiatives are informed by an important rationale to create ownership of human rights in local communities. By facilitating the inclusion of faith-based actors in the development process, UNFPA aims to develop policies that have substance, meaning, and staying power in the communities where they are implemented.³

UNFPA believes faith-based organisations are vital agents of change in local settings. FBOs have moral standing in local communities, and are best placed with the ability to access core and fundamental beliefs, attitudes, and behavioural nuances of local community members. FBOs and religious leaders occupy a strategically important position to influence and impact members of their communities to come to a position of understanding and advocacy on crucial issues such as HIV and AIDs, and the empowerment of women.

Because of their long-standing role in the provision of crucial services in local communities, many FBOs are well placed position to share success stories on population and development issues, including programmes and initiatives that embrace cultural and religious sensitivities. These stories of success can then be used as tools and strategies for action by other FBOs experiencing similar problems in the same region or country.

A sense of hope and renewed energy characterised each and every session of the Global Forum. A dynamic and energetic process of partnership-building provided the foundation of not only the Global Forum, but also the Regional Forums that preceded the Global gathering. With each new relationship built, and each existing one revisited and renewed, the Global Interfaith

³ *United Nations Inter-agency Consultation on Engagement with Faith-based Organisations: Proceedings Report* (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2008), p. 4.

Network on Population and Development became a reality. Many Forum participants expressed strong interest in and intentions establish local and regional FBO partnerships, using the Interfaith Network as a modality for action, so as to streamline FBO work in the field and in doing so maximise the delivery of services, such as education, health care, and humanitarian relief.

Together, Forum participants agreed on the importance of the Global Interfaith Network, and FBO partners gave their full pledge of support to the UNFPA mandate to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV and AIDS, and every woman and girl is treated with dignity and respect.

A) SYNTHESIS OF CHALLENGES AND NEEDS FOR JOINT ENDEAVOURS OF UNFPA AND FBOs

Interpretation of Religious Texts

Forum participants consistently raised the problem of misinterpretation of religious texts for the benefit of core groups in positions of power.

Textual misinterpretations of religious sources are often used to justify violence and discrimination against women. Furthermore, misuse of religious texts can fuel the stigma and taboo attached to those living with HIV and AIDS in some societies, and leads to further marginalization.

Forum participants recognized the reality that not all religious actors employ fluid and dynamic interpretations of religious texts based on contextual realities of the twenty-first century. There is an ongoing need for UNFPA, in partnership with FBOs and religious leaders, to strategise ways of drawing more conservative religious figures into dialogue on population and development issues.

Technical Training

In each and every Panel at the Global Forum, FBO participants expressed the need for increased technical training on key issues, greater access to technical resources, and further development of skills. Many Forum participants favoured the idea that such training courses could be held systematically on a regional basis, so as to reflect the cultural context of the participants.

Some FBO representatives expressed an interest in administrative and management training. Religious leaders, they noted, may be well adept at maintaining houses of worship, but lack administrative skills to sustain the behind-the-scenes work of faith-based organisations as a crucial element of their practical engagement with critical development issues.

Another key challenge raised repeatedly by Forum participants was the lack of culturally-sensitive training, and gender-sensitive programming, on behalf of local governments, police, and military officials.

Interfaith Partnerships and Resource Sharing

Forum participants agreed on the need for greater interfaith cooperation and collaboration between different FBOs and among religious leaders in local and regional contexts. They also referenced the need to consider among each other the possibility of equal distribution and sharing of resources at the local and regional levels.

FBO Partnerships with Government and Civil Society

There is an ongoing need for FBOs, government, and non-government organisations to find ways of working synergistically on key development and population issues.

UNFPA can play critical role in helping to establish and foster these relationships, especially by advocating the crucial role of FBOs in meeting population and development challenges. FBOs can enhance the work of NGOs and government bodies, as faith-based actors are uniquely placed to access the most fundamental beliefs and values informing people's everyday lives in local contexts. FBO networking with NGOs and government bodies will also the strengthen FBO initiatives done in partnership with UNFPA.

B) SYNTHESIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN UNFPA AND FBOs

General Recommendations

Commitment

- Due to the unique position and the strategic importance of faith-based actors in local communities, UNFPA should give equal consideration to pro-ICPD FBOs as to other civil society organizations, when allocating resources, forming strategic alliances, and gathering and consolidating its partnership outreach;
- When seeking out strategic partners, UNFPA should deliberately target the outreach capabilities of FBOs to provide services at the grassroots level, and integrate these capacities in calculations of impact;
- UNFPA and FBOs should collaborate to develop relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation of joint programmes;
- UNFPA needs to establish the terms, principles and modality of a clear, long-term commitment to dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning with FBOs. Within this, the mechanisms for partnership and collaboration need to be simplified [UNFPA's *Guidelines for Engaging FBOs as Agents of Change – May 2009*].

Communication

- UNFPA should ensure follow-up to the FBO Forums by creating an Interfaith Network and Database/Directory of diverse FBOs that can synergize their efforts and build mutually constructive partnerships [launched the *Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development* in October 2008].

Capacity Building

- A greater focus on the development of capacity building for faith-based actors, particularly ‘training’ on the common ground of the UN’s human rights mandate and religious invocations of human dignity;
- The promotion of ongoing and successful interfaith initiatives on the ICPD mandate areas with UN Country Teams, and linking FBOs with donors to enhance resource mobilization capacities and long-term sustainability;
- FBOs are well placed to provide cultural sensitization training for governments, uniformed services (the police and the military), and other development actors. UNFPA’s support in reaching out to governments to facilitate this is requested.

Information/Knowledge

- UNFPA should continue to produce evidence-based educational and informational materials for dissemination to FBOs;
- Messages pertaining to the ICPD agenda should be tailored to, and inclusive of a religious perspective;
- The faith-based community needs to be supported to generate community-level, disaggregated data/statistics for use by policy makers.

Advocacy

- UNFPA should consider forming faith-based advisory committees, and/or integrating FBO representatives on existing advisory groups at the national, regional and international levels;
- UNFPA should strategize towards and support the creation of a central role for faith-based youth within UNFPA programming, to be consulted in the development and implementation of all initiatives that directly affect youth and adolescents.

Thematic Recommendations

HIV and AIDS

UNFPA was called upon to:

1. **Strengthen the Interfaith Networks and build bridges between CSOs and FBOs** in advocacy, capacity building and information sharing initiatives around HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, as well as care and support for those already living with the disease.
2. Consult religious leaders (RLs) and FBOs in developing and implementing **training programmes in conflict and post-conflict situations**, for HIV and AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support;
3. Together with UNAIDS and civil society organizations, assist FBOs and RLs through capacity building (including technical trainings), and advocacy campaigns, to **facilitate positive and supportive responses to people living with HIV**;
4. Provide FBOs with **evidence-based scientific research on HIV and AIDS**, and assist them in their efforts to communicate this knowledge to the wider faith-based communities including especially sensitizing them and their broader faith-based **communities on the use of condoms to prevent HIV**.

Emergency Assistance, Humanitarian Relief and Migration

UNFPA was called upon to:

5. **Recognize and mainstream the key role of FBOs** in the planning, implementation, and monitoring stages of emergency response plans.
6. Facilitate FBO liaison and work with the media to **initiate rural/urban awareness-raising campaigns about migrants rights to education, health-care and social inclusion**;
7. Buttress FBOs in **providing rehabilitation and support to victims of human trafficking** as they require greater effort to deliver essential services to families in need, such as counseling and community reintegration;
8. Work with government and civil society counterparts to support FBOs in the **development of a methodology to redress the problems experienced by migrants, and to analyse the relationships between migration and religion**;
9. Form **coalitions to include FBOs and work collectively to protect the rights of migrants**, including the right to education, employment, and healthcare, and emphasize the shared responsibilities that countries of origin and destination have regarding human rights and migration. This should cover dissemination and implementation of the Migrants' Rights Convention, and **encouragement of inclusive social practices in the wider community**;
10. Assist concerned FBOs to **set up a database** on their specific contributions and roles with regards to migration globally, and assessments of this role scientifically;

11. Take into account the unique **capacities of FBOs to provide people with spiritual support and counseling in times of emergency, disaster, or in humanitarian settings**, which can complement and be coupled with the material and resource support offered by secular response teams, and mainstream the key role of FBOs in the planning, implementation, and monitoring stages of emergency response plans;
12. Tailor support to FBOs during emergencies and humanitarian crises, to **facilitate stronger partnerships with other local, national and regional partners**;
13. In collaboration with FBOs and concerned humanitarian partners, design **strategies for the prevention of exploitation and abuse of vulnerable and marginalized communities** during emergencies and humanitarian crises;
14. Collaborate with FBOs to **plan and implement women-focused interventions** to meet the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women in times of humanitarian crisis.

Violence Against Women (VAW) and Women's Empowerment

UNFPA was called upon to:

15. **Mainstream VAW issues into programmatic partnerships** with FBOs and support them to develop training courses to enable them to take into account the multidimensional nature of VAW and design interventions accordingly;
16. Provide FBOs with **research and evidence based knowledge linking VAW to HIV and AIDS**;
17. Create **safe spaces for 'difficult discussions' around VAW**, including addressing the problem of violence within religious institutions;
18. Establish a **task force of religious leaders, policy makers, and civil society** members to initiate in-depth analysis of harmful practices in specific countries, and formulate appropriate strategies to deal with them;
19. Encourage **interfaith collaboration around the promotion of gender justice** and gender relations based on equal human dignity;
20. **Target FBOs as part of the outreach, programming and resource mobilization to engage men** in women's empowerment, including the implementation of gender-sensitization programmes for men and counseling courses on stress and anger management
21. Endorse relevant FBOs as potential partners of local governments in the **development of culturally-sensitive curricula for schools**, and liaise with governments to support FBOs to tackle violence against women, as well as **build partnerships with government bodies to sensitize and train key actors**, such as the police and judiciary officials, on the issue of violence against women and mechanisms of protection and support, including in times of emergencies and humanitarian crisis.

Reproductive and Maternal Health

UNFPA was called upon to:

22. Assist FBOs in the establishment of a **coalition of “Religious Leaders for Maternal Health”**. This coalition should be integrated within global efforts for maternal health, but can also be tasked to champion the dissemination of broader messages and facts on sexual and reproductive health;
23. Together with civil society organizations, encourage and facilitate the **inclusion of faith-based youth** into the design and implementation of programmes on sexual and reproductive health;
24. Work with FBOs to **promote men’s involvement in reproductive health** initiatives;
25. Mobilize FBOs in disseminating information and awareness-raising of **adolescent sexual and reproductive health especially during conflicts and emergencies** and enhance family planning initiatives to help people make informed choices, especially during times of conflict and disaster;
26. Support FBOs to **provide a range of reproductive health services** such as: premarital training and SRH counseling for couples, accessibility of education and services especially in rural areas, and access to accurate, up-to-date and complete information;
27. Enhance FBO initiatives aimed at **encouraging community-level discussion and critical thinking** about the causes of maternal mortality;
28. **Document and disseminate lessons learned of FBO engagement** in all areas of reproductive health, as well as family planning.

XII - GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AEG	Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala
AOL	Art of Living Foundation
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
AIPD	Associations Islamiques en Population et Developement
AJSA	Women's Section, Anjuman-Sunnat Jamaat-ul Association
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
BGF	Buddhist Gem Fellowship
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CDD	Catolicas por el Derecho a Decidir
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGHRB	Culture, Gender and Human Rights Branch, UNFPA
CIPK	Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya
CLAI	Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias
CNBB	Pastoral de Movilidad Humana de la Conferencia Nacional de los Obispos del Brazil
CORDAID	Dutch Catholic Agency for Relief and Development
CWS	Church World Services
CCJU	Confraternidad Judeo-Cristiana del Uruguay
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FPA	Family Planning Association
FFPAM	Federation of Family Planning Association, Malaysia
FOMWAG	Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Ghana
FRDPPMM	Fundación Red Desarrollo y Paz de los Montes de María
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IAPD	Islamic Association on Population and Development
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IMCSS	Interchurch Mission Christian Social Service
IIU	International Islamic University
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPPRP	Interfaith Partnership for the Promotion of Responsible Parenthood
IRC	Interreligious Council of Liberia
IRCU	Interreligious Council of Uganada
LCMS	Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore
LCW	Federación Luterana Mundial
MAC	Malaysian AIDS Council
MACCA	Masjid Council for Community Advancement

MAF	Malaysian AIDS Foundation
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NIOPD	Nigerian Islamic Association on Population and Development
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNABRH	National Network for Afro-Brazilian Religions and Health
NPFDB	National Population and Family Development Board, Malaysia
PFPPA	Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association
RFP	Religions for Peace
RLs	Religious Leaders
PLWHA	People Living with HIV and AIDS
PoA	Programme of Action
RHAM	Reproductive Health Adolescents Module
RHR	Reproductive Health and Rights
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SECAM	Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TD	Technical Division, UNFPA
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHABITAT	United Nations Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women
WCCA	World Council of Churches Armenia
WFDA	Women Faith Development Alliance
WHO	World Health Organisation
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
ZINGO	Zambia Interfaith Networking Group

XIII - REFERENCES

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ANNEXES

ANNEX I – FULL SPEECHES OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director

Thank you, Safiye, for your kind introduction and thank you for being one of the leaders of UNFPA who has always believed in me. Thank you Azza and colleagues from the countries, regions, and Headquarters for your tireless work in organizing this meeting and bringing all of us together in this historical city of Istanbul. Thank you Peer and colleagues from the UNFPA office in Turkey for your outstanding service to all of us. And thank you to Mahmood, our UN Resident Coordinator, who has provided his support and has accepted to moderate this session.

Esteemed religious leaders and leaders of faith-based organisations,

Distinguished Deputy President and Representative of Religious Affairs of Turkey,

My colleagues from the United Nations system,

Dear sisters and brothers, and friends,

It is my honour to join you today at the Global Forum on Strengthening Partnerships with Faith-based Organisations.. It is truly gratifying to see leaders of all faiths, from all regions, coming together to tackle common challenges facing our world today. We are grateful that many of you have journeyed from afar to be with us here today, and we appreciate that some of you from the Jewish faith are celebrating holy days with us.

Eight years ago, when I was interviewed for the position of UNFPA Executive Director, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, asked what I would bring to this office. I told him that I would do two things. First, I would ensure improved programme delivery led not only by governments but also by the communities themselves. And second, UNFPA would reach out to engage community, culture, and faith leaders in the service of “We the Peoples.” I promised him that I would do all I could to reach common ground because the quest for human dignity is greater than all of us.

Today, eight years later, as I look at this room and see us together in this great city, my heart is filled with deep joy, satisfaction, and humility. I firmly believe that partnerships are the only way forward if our ideals of human rights are to become living realities for every man and woman, young and old. The struggle against poverty, poor health and illiteracy, and violence and discrimination against women, cannot be won without the engagement of all sectors of society, including people and institutions in the faith community.

During the last eight years, I have worked with wonderful, committed colleagues in UNFPA to institutionalize a culturally sensitive approach – a ‘cultural lens’ – to our humanitarian and

development work. We have done so based on the wisdom we have gained over the years that sustainable social change must be deeply rooted.

The UNFPA mission is to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV and AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. At the heart of our work lies a focus on human rights and human dignity. We believe that all individuals have inherent worth, and a right to reach their full potential.

In my life, I have been blessed with many opportunities. I was born to parents from Medina, Saudi Arabia. As devout Muslims, they took seriously the first surah in the Quran, the command to read. By deciding to educate me at a time when Saudi Arabia had no schools for girls, they believed they were doing their duties as committed believers. They knew very well that knowledge is the basis for faith and informed life-decisions.

My father, supported by my mother, had a dream for me and so they decided to send me to a girls' boarding school in Cairo when I was seven. My father later told me that leaving me there that day was one of the most difficult experiences of his life. As I cried, every nerve, bone, and cell in his body was telling him to take me back home with him. But he knew that he was doing what God told every Muslim to do – to ensure that every child is educated.

He left me at a Presbyterian missionary school in Cairo because it would provide me with the best education and social protection. It was not an issue for him that it was a Christian school because he believed and he instilled in me the belief that God is the same God for everyone, though expressed differently by each faith. He wanted me to have the opportunity to grow and learn. But most importantly he taught me tolerance, mutual respect, and acceptance of others.

After years of studying very hard, I was the first Saudi woman to be awarded a government scholarship for university study in the United States. This experience gave me the space and the opportunity to meet students and professors from all backgrounds and religious faiths, confirming the values that my father had taught me.

I tell you these stories because I would not be standing here in front of you today, as an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, leading a very sensitive and comprehensive agenda, if I had not received support and an education. I was empowered by both knowledge and faith to make decisions about every step of my life. With the support of my family, especially my father and brothers, and my country, I was able to choose my educational track, my husband, the number of my children and the spacing between them, and my workplace. I was able to choose the direction of my life.

I was fortunate and remain grateful. But today many young people, and especially young women, are not so fortunate. They do not have the opportunities that I was afforded and they are unable to achieve their dreams. Worse yet, some are so resigned to their conditions that they do not even dare to dream of a better life. Sometimes, this situation is justified erroneously on the basis of cultural traditions and interpretation of religious beliefs.

My dear sisters and brothers,

We have come together from all corners of the globe to build a global network united by a common vision – a vision where every human being has inherent dignity and worth, where every human being can live free of fear and want, and reach his or her full potential.

This Forum is the culmination of a journey. The first step was the Africa Forum in Durban in December 2007. Faith-based partners from over 15 African countries came together to share their experience of partnering with UNFPA to eradicate HIV and violence against women.

From there, we travelled to Kuala Lumpur, where our partners from more than 12 Asia and Pacific countries convened, and then to Cairo, where partners from over 9 Arab countries came together last July. We ended in Buenos Aires, where partners from 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries gathered to discuss the best ways to combat maternal mortality and violence against women, to fight the spread of HIV and the stigma of those affected by AIDS, and to address migration issues and the concerns of young people in our fast-changing world.

As religious leaders and leaders of faith-based organisations, you know very well the challenges that individuals and families in your communities face. As leaders, you promote the core beliefs and ideals found in all the great faith traditions: compassion, solidarity, and human dignity.

It is in this spirit that world leaders agreed on the Millennium Development Goals as a common framework, and shared responsibility, to ensure a life of dignity for all. These goals build on agreements reached during the 1990s at UN-sponsored international conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development, held nearly 15 years ago in Cairo. The Programme of Action of this conference is the frame of reference for the support that countries request from UNFPA.

This Programme of Action shifted the population agenda away from a top down focus on demographics to a focus on the rights of people to make choices about their lives, including the right to determine the number and spacing of their children. The shift was clearly from counting people to making people count, from people as beneficiaries to people as actors responsible for their lives. It reinforced the notion that people are at the centre of economic and social development. The recommendations went further to address the plight and rights of migrants, displaced persons and refugees. There is a focus on population and the environment, and ways to improve the quality of life while protecting prospects for future generations.

The Programme of Action asserts that the family is the basic unit of society and deals with the role of families in changing social and economic environments. And it goes on to elaborate reproductive health and rights, including maternal health and family planning, and to stress the critical importance of women's empowerment, equity, and equality.

Despite controversies, this agreement was reached by 179 countries through consensus. And it was agreed, because of the sensitive nature of the agenda, that the implementation of its recommendations is the sovereign right of each country, consistent with national laws and development priorities. At the same time, delegates agreed that this had to be done with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights.

We all know that issues concerning relations within families, between couples, relating to sexual relations and reproduction, can be both sensitive and controversial. Of course they are: they cut to the very core of the human experience and emotion.

Yet the silence and taboos surrounding many of these issues often cause human suffering and can mean the difference between life and death. And I believe we have a moral obligation to take a stand.

We have to ask ourselves:

Is it moral to allow a woman to die every minute during childbirth when we know what can save her?

Is it moral to extend the suffering of a woman who was raped and violated, to endure a life of shame and stigma?

Is it moral to leave refugees and displaced persons, mostly women and their children, to an existence deprived of the basics of life because we do not see the special needs of women?

Is it moral to forbid a girl to have the same chances in life as a boy simply because she was born a girl?

As human beings, we share a common humanity. And yet for too many people today, the comprehensive package of knowledge, services, and support they need to change their conditions, to escape from poverty and enjoy a life of health and opportunity, remain beyond reach.

Your religious communities have traditionally served as the oldest social service networks. You have moral authority and social and political outreach within your respective networks. You are able to employ these resources to improve human wellbeing and serve the purpose of the greater good.

UNFPA has a legacy of engaging the faith-based communities. I am proud to report that we have identified over 400 existing partnerships with Buddhist, Hindu, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim groups.

Esteemed leaders,
My sisters and brothers,

I have talked a lot about the values we hold in common. But our partnership is not just about hope and ideas – above all it is about taking action. I hope that our dialogue during the next few days is geared towards concrete results. How can we enhance our partnership for better service delivery?

I hope that we will agree to establish a Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development, reinforcing the networks that you have already established at the regional level.

I envision the global and regional networks as a dynamic chain of relations to mobilize faith-based actors for the human rights and dignity of women, men, and young people, in the specific areas we gathered to address. These networks can identify and coordinate our support to the people we serve and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and integration with other partners to find solutions.

Guided by mutual respect of our differences and collective commitment to common goals, these networks would multiply our outreach and impact. I also envision this network as a source of knowledge and advice to me as the Executive Director of UNFPA, especially as we face increasingly complex challenges such as the financial and food crisis and climate change and their impact on communities and individuals.

I very much hope that we will be able to speak openly about the challenges facing women, men, and young people. Over the next two days, we will examine existing partnerships and develop ways to move them forward, and build new ones. We will listen and learn from each other and highlight lessons learned. We will look at cases of success where faith-based organisations and UNFPA tackled obstacles and challenges. And together we will identify principles for the way forward, and how UNFPA can best support this network and shared commitment.

My colleagues and I, not only in UNFPA but across the United Nations system, welcome those who have joined us for this meeting, are fully aware of the intricacies, complexities, and sensitivities inherent in these partnerships. I do not expect us to be the same but I do expect that we focus on what brings us together to serve the communities who need us and to identify ways in which we can complement each other.

Let us hope that over the next two days we reach common ground to ensure the human rights and dignity of all people, especially those who are marginalized, stigmatized, and excluded. Let us commit to continuing this journey together.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid
Executive Director
UNFPA

CLOSING STATEMENT

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director

Words of Appreciation

I thank you all as leaders in faith for sharing your views, and allowing all of us from UNFPA and our United Nations partner agencies to listen and learn from you, and in turn share our views with you.

Thank you for traveling from afar and joining us for the UNFPA Global Forum of Faith-based Organisations on Population and Development. For me, this meeting was a dream-come-true. But I also see the hard work awaiting us, as we must now live up to the expectations we have created.

I thank all the people who have made this gathering possible, and who have ensured that the meeting ran smoothly.

I express my deepest gratitude to the government of Turkey, represented by the Governor and Mayor of Istanbul. Special thanks also goes to the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul, who graced us with his presence in spite of the celebrations for the Jewish holiday.

Many thanks also go to:

The UNFPA Turkey Country Office: Peer Sieben as the leader, with Tunga Tuzer, Meltem Agduk, Sedef Sener, Nezih, and Adnan.

UNFPA colleagues from the country offices and regional divisions at Headquarters, who work closely with local FBO networks.

Special thanks goes to the UNFPA Technical Division, led by Werner Haug and his team.

Thank you to the Information and External Relations Division, led by Safiye Cagar, with her team. Special thanks to Alvaro Serrano who was behind the fantastic video presentations, capturing your faces and voices for all of us to see and hear.

And to Azza Karam, Senior Culture Advisor in the Gender, Human Rights, and Culture Branch, for her sleepless nights and days – made more difficult by my endless emails and requests.

If one is to thank one's immediate family, then thanks go to Ann Leoncavallo, Sherin Saddallah, and Geralda Menard, from the Office of the Executive Director. Together, they work tirelessly to support me.

And naturally, I appreciate the work of the interpreters at this Forum. They have done a great job, especially as we get carried away speaking quickly with emotions and passion!

A thank you is also extended to the Hotel Staff, who went out of their way to provide us with the services we required.

Gaps and Weaknesses

We have heard from my faith-based colleagues the successful conclusion of this conference. But it is my responsibility to supplement this with my own assessment of the gaps, so as to learn from this experience and enrich our future efforts.

As we reviewed the Forum Agenda and as it unfolded here in Istanbul, I feel we could have done much better. We did not always manage to have the correct balance of gender, region, and religion for each panel and session. Yet a good number of invitees apologised for not accepting the invitation to the Forum, for reasons that were not always meaningful. Maybe they wanted to wait and see what would take place before participating at such a gathering.

I ask you to give all the praise to my colleagues who worked tirelessly to make this gathering happen, and I accept responsibility for any gaps and weaknesses. Organizing this event brought me many anxieties: recognizing our differences, respecting our spaces, whilst building on our common areas of work – and managing all of this in just two days! I am comforted by your presence and your support for establishing the Global Interfaith Network. All the hard work has been worth the effort.

Areas of Consensus

Listening to you, what did I hear? I have been listening very intently to all of you and so have my colleagues. I heard that we are using each other's language: FBO participants are increasingly talking about human rights, and the development agencies are increasingly talking about human dignity. Basically, we are all agreeing that human rights ensure human dignity.

I heard the agreement that there is energy in faith, and in working together to reach common ground. We have learned that the teachings of faith traditions can, and should, address root causes of the tragedies we face today and focus on prevention as the front line of defense. We agreed that we must make progress in the areas we have discussed in this meeting – to improve maternal health, promote the empowerment of women and gender equality, address HIV and AIDS and support all people affected by the disease, address the challenges faced by youth in general and within the context of migration in particular, end violence against women, and provide support to people affected by conflict and crisis.

We have heard that all that forms of harm towards all people are against the basic spirit of all faiths. Therefore, all the issues we discussed harm people and they are all components of one form of violence or another. They are against the basic spirit of all religions. It is our duty to join the energies of our faiths and our institutions to address these abuses of human rights with all our human and material resources.

As a principle, we should always ask ourselves: How do we see and interpret violence in all its manifestations. Would I accept to suffer? Would I want my wife, sister, or daughter to suffer? Would I want my adolescent children to suffer? If not, then each one of us should move with full commitment to end all forms of violence against any member in our communities, knowing that women and children are the most vulnerable. They should get our full commitment and attention.

Many of your comments reached out to look for the common ground between us, as secular and religious actors for change. What we have all heard from each other is that although we come from different faiths, different regions and different experiences, we share much in common. We share the common values of compassion, tolerance, respect for differences, and a passion for improving the lives of the people we serve. Together we can push the borders to make a real difference.

We differ by necessity when we come to details because we come from different spaces. We have different definitions and interpretations. And we see political circumstances differently. We explain conflicts differently. But there is only one solution: Dialogue, Dialogue, Dialogue. We need dialogue to reach solutions that ensure the human rights of all and the dignity of all.

I heard you all say that religious leaders and FBOs should always be taken into account as part of the solution and not part of the problem. You can play a pivotal role in bringing peace with justice, because all faiths believe in peace, and always in justice.

Communities can always be mobilized to be bridges for peace, development, human dignity, and human rights.

Strategies for Actions

In listening to the panelists and the discussions that followed, we heard many recommendations on how an Interfaith Network can help to support our collective work.

In sharing your experiences, many of you have expressed the desire to continue to learn from others on our common areas of work, by focusing on the reality on the ground.

I also heard of the need for a safe space, virtual or real, where free discussions can take place on difficult issues – such as sexuality – so that we can move forward in supporting people looking for improved physical and mental health.

Many of you have also mentioned the need for scientific-based evidence, information, research, and technical support to build knowledge and capacity so that you can better support your constituencies, both in terms of the messages you deliver and the services you provide.

Many of you have also expressed the sentiment that to achieve concrete results, we must build bridges between religious leaders, political decision-makers, and secular civil society. FBOs have a role to play in advocacy to promote the adoption of people-centered policies.

There were many suggestions that we must be inclusive and strategic in our work, and that we must work on two levels – with mainstream populations, and also with vulnerable and marginalized populations.

We must also include youth when we discuss the issues related to them. This particular goal will require commitment from all of us. I can promise you that UNFPA will include young people from faith-based organisations in our special youth programme. And perhaps the most important is that we cannot make further progress unless both young women and men are fully involved.

In humanitarian response, I heard that we must work for dialogue and we must advocate peace and justice. Humanitarian response is not charity. It is about the rights of the displaced and refugees. The responsibility to support them falls upon all of us. I also have heard that humanitarian response is not only about providing material needs, but also providing spiritual support.

Many of you have stressed that we need strong country and regional alliances to make the Global Interfaith Network effective.

Collectively, you concluded by expressing a clear desire to form an Interfaith Network on Population and Development, and to build on the linkages among us. To make this happen, I will ensure that we have focal points for the Network in our country and regional offices, to join the focal points we already have at Headquarters. The first steps for the establishment of the Global Network will be at the national and regional levels.

Looking further ahead, we can agree to meet again at the global level in 2010, to review the progress that has been made at the country and regional levels, and to set our programme for the following two years.

Closing Remarks

I know that if we work in the spirit that filled this room, progress will be made. That spirit will ensure that all members of the Network at the national, regional and global levels are connected, and that they are treated as equal partners, coming together to find solutions through their respective beliefs and actions. The Network will be based on common goals, respectful of our differences, and tolerant of each others' points of view.

Finally, I want to say that we are honoured by your declarations of support and your commitment. We have gathered here in Istanbul to discuss common challenges and to reach common ground. That common ground is *not* how you can help UNFPA or how UNFPA can

support you. It is about how we can work *together* to ensure that every birth is wanted, every pregnancy is safe, every young person is free of HIV, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

I hereby declare the inauguration of the Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development, a Network that will be inclusive of all faiths, ensuring ethnic and indigenous representation.

The Network is yours. You build it and sustain it by your commitment. It is yours and we, at UNFPA, will be with you to support your efforts. It will live and grow by your faiths and your energies.

I now invite religious leaders to bless our partnership, and the last blessing will bring the Global FBO Forum to a close.

ANNEX II - GLOBAL FORUM AGENDA

DAY 1: MONDAY 20 OCTOBER 2008

08:45 – 09:30 **Registration**

09:30 – 12:30 **Opening and Welcome**

09:30 – 09:40 Address by Mr. Mahmood A. Ayub, UN Resident Coordinator, Turkey (Moderator)

09:40 – 09:50 Address by Ms. Safiye Cagar, Director, IERD, UNFPA

09:50 – 10:15 Address by Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA

10:15 – 10:30 Address by Mr. Mustafa Cagrici, Deputy, President of Religious Affairs, Turkey

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee/Tea Break

11:00 – 11:15 Viewing of Video “The Power of Faith”, Introduced by Ms. Azza Karam, Senior Culture Adviser, UNFPA

11:15 – 12:30 **Religious Leaders: Statements of commitment to partnership between FBOs and UNFPA**

Moderator

Mr. Werner Haug, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA

Statements by:

- Mr. Anish Dua, on behalf of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, India
- Ven. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, Thailand
- Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, United Kingdom
- Mr. Elias Szczynicki, Peru
- Rev. Julio Murray, Panama
- Sheikh Shaaban Mubaje, Mufti of Uganda
- Dr. Hassan Ezzeddine Ali Bahr al Uloom, Iraq

12:30 – 14:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 15:40	<p>Panel I: HIV and AIDS and Maternal Health</p> <p>Moderator Mr. Hafeedh Chekir, Director, Arab States Regional Office, UNFPA</p>
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14:00 – 15:00 Panelists

Africa

Ms. Fagmeeda Miller, Positive Muslims, South Africa

Arab States

Prof. Mongia Nefzi Souafi, Universite Zitouna, Tunisia

Asia and the Pacific

Dr. Malek Afzali, Director, Public Health Research Institute at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Ms. Djamal Frontbek Kyzy, Head of religious women's NGO Mutakalim, Krygyzstan

Latin America and Caribbean

Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Religions for Peace, Latin America

Discussant

Ms. Geertje Van Mensvoort, CORDAID

Rapporteur

Mr. James Matarazzo, INERELA+

15:00 – 15:40 Discussion

15:40 – 16:00 Coffee/Tea Break

16:00 – 18:00	<p>Panel II: Youth and Migration</p> <p>Moderator Ms. Hajia Katumi Mahama, Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations, Ghana</p>
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16:00 – 17:00

Panelists

Africa

Bishop Meshak Mabuza, President, Council of Swaziland

Arab States

Prof. Mizouri Laroussi, Universite Ezitouna, Tunisia

Asia and the Pacific

Pastor John Wemin, National Chair, Destiny Fellowship of Churches, Papua New Guinea

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Mr. Karen Nazaryan, Chairman, World Council of Churches, Armenia

Latin America and Caribbean

Hna Maria do Carmo dos Santos Goncalves, National Conference of Catholic Bishops of Brazil

Discussant

Mr. Jan Henningsson, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Rapporteur

Ms. Maryam Sheikh Abdikadir, Nairobi Population Council, Nigeria

17:00 – 18:00

Discussion

19:30

Gala Dinner (Ballroom, LL floor level, Hilton Hotel)

DAY 2: TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2008

08:00 – 09:00 Regional Breakfast Meetings

With UNFPA Regional Directors and FBOs from the Regions

09:00 – 09:15 Viewing of Video: “Reaching Common Ground”,

Introduced by Mr. Alvaro Serrano, Multimedia Adviser, UNFPA

<p>09:15 – 11:00</p>	<p>Panel III: Violence against Women and Women’s Empowerment</p> <p>Moderator Ms. Aminata Toure, Chief, Gender, Human Rights and Culture Branch, Technical Division, UNFPA</p>
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09:15 – 10:15 Panelists

Africa

Mrs. Fatou Diop, AIOPD (Islamic Association for Population and Development), Senegal

Arab States

H.E. Nawal Faouri, Jordan

Asia and Pacific

Mr. Mualana Abdul Kalam Azad, Chairman of the Masjid Council for Community Advancement, Bangladesh

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Anastasiya Kryvitskaya, Interchurch Mission, Christian Social Service, Orthodox Church, Belarus

Latin America and Caribbean

Rev. Blanca Armand Pilon, Uruguay

Discussant

Sister Ngozi Uti, Executive Director, Centre for Women’s Studies and Intervention, Nigeria

Rapporteur

Ms. Natalie Fisher-Spalton, Deputy General Secretary, Young Women’s Christian Association

10:15 – 11:00 Discussion

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee/Tea break

11:30 – 13:15	<p>Panel IV: Emergencies and Humanitarian Settings</p> <p>Moderator Ms. Suneeta Mukherjee, UNFPA Rep., Philippines</p>
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11:30 – 12:30 Panelists

Africa

Mr. Ignace Singirankabo, Network of Religious Confessions, Rwanda

Arab States

Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Chief Judge of Sharia Courts, Palestinian Authority

Asia and Pacific

Mr. Asanga Tilakaratne, Chairman of the Damrivi Foundation, Sri Lanka

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Fr. Octavian Mosin, Moldovan Orthodox Metropolitan Church, Press Secretary, Moldova

Latin America and the Caribbean

R.P. Rafael Castillo, Colombia

Discussant

Mr. Saleh Saeed, CEO, Islamic Relief

Rapporteur

Mr. Alex Ross, Director of Programmes and Partnership, World Health Organisation

12:30 – 13:15 Discussion

13:15 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 15:45	<p>Panel V: Comparative UN Experiences with FBOs</p> <p>Moderator Ms. Azza Karam, Senior Culture Adviser, UNFPA</p>
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14:30 – 15:15

Panelists

- UNAIDS, Ms Sally Smith, FBO Partnerships Advisor. Geneva.
- UNESCO, Ms Rosa Guerreiro, Programme Specialist, Interfaith Dialogue, Paris.
- UNICEF, Mr. Stephen Hanmer, NGO Partnership Advisor, NY
- UNDP, Ms. Khadija Moalla, HARPAS Coordinator, Cairo
- World Health Organisation, Mr. Alex Ross, Director, Programme on Partnerships and UN Reform, Geneva
- International Labor Organisation, Mr. Pierre Martinot-Lagarde, S.J. Special Advisor for Socio-Religious Affairs, Geneva.
- DESA, Mr. Marc-Andre Dorel, Special Advisor, NY.
- HABITAT, Yamina Djacta, Deputy Director, UN-HABITAT, New York Office

Discussant

Ms. Segolene Adam, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Rapporteur

Ms. Ann Erb-Leoncavallo, Communication Adviser, UNFPA

15:15 – 15:45

Questions & Answers

15:45 – 16:15

Coffee/Tea Break

16:15–17:15	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel VI: Sharing Consensus on Interfaith Networking with UNFPA</p> <p>Moderator Mr. Sidiki Coulibaly, UNFPA Representative, Nigeria</p>
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Panelists

FBO facilitators

- Mr. Jowaad Kezaala, Inter-religious Council of Uganda
- Dr. Hany El-Banna, World Humanitarian Forum
- Rev. Pastor Pax Tan, Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore
- Most Ven. Khambo Lama Dambajav from the Dashi Choiling Monastery, Mongolia
- Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Religions for Peace’s Global Women of Faith Network
- Dr. Vinu Aram, President, Shanti Ashram, India

Rapporteur

Mr. Andrew Begg, Special Assistant, IERD, UNFPA

17:15–17:30	<p style="text-align: center;">Religious Leaders: Blessing of the Consensus</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Werner Haug, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA</p>
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- Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Palestinian Authority
- Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, Orthodox Church in America
- Rev. Father Paolos Serour, Orthodox Church of Egypt
- Fulya Bardakoglu, Bahai
- Swami Mitrananda, Chinmaya Mission, India
- Ms. Mae Nalva D’Oxum, National Network for Afro-Brazilian Religions and Health

17:30 – 17:45

Concluding Statement of Executive Director of UNFPA

ANNEX III - UNFPA Guidelines for Engaging FBOs as Agents of Change

These Guidelines provide a critical framework for engagement with faith-based organisations (FBOs). They are not a blue-print. Like all similar guidelines, these are provided with the pragmatism that each UNFPA Country and Regional Office will consider them in light of the specific political, social, cultural and economic circumstances.

The Guidelines are designed to provide a rationale for the engagement of and with, faith-based organisations, the principles structuring such engagements, and the strategy for partnership. The elements of these guidelines are derived from UNFPA's terms of partnership with other constituencies (i.e. parliamentarians and youth). In addition, the guidelines are built on the lessons learned from prior Country Office engagement, gleaned from the mapping exercise undertaken from 2006-2008; best practices from case studies compiled from 2002-2008; as well as the recommendations and discussions carried out with FBOs themselves over the course of 2007-2008.

RATIONALE

"At a time where basic needs are becoming increasingly harder to provide for more than half of the world's population, we can no longer avoid acknowledging the parallel faith-based development universe which reaches so many and provides so much."

The case for working with faith-based organizations, as one community among many, as critical agents of change, is no longer a matter of discussion, but rather, one of considered, systematic and deliberate engagement of the like-minded partners among them. For many years, international development has been a field dominated by largely 'secular' agents of development, with a preference for keeping faith and faith-related matters strictly in the so-called

'private' domains. At the same time, many scholars, human rights activists, and indeed, development actors, have argued persuasively that the dividing line between 'public' and 'private' is increasingly blurred. This is increasingly the case in a globalised world where information technology enables rapid and pervasive information flows.

Moreover, there is clearly an important parallel faith-based universe of development, one which provides anywhere between 30-60% of health care and educational services in many developing countries. At a time when basic needs are becoming increasingly harder to provide for more than half of the world's population, we can no longer avoid acknowledging these parallel faith-based development interventions which reach so many and provide so much. Many are critical venues for outreach, resources, and service delivery.

The world of faith-based development organizations is filled with a diversity of mandates, missions, expertise, services, modality of work, among other things. Religions themselves are a vast and complex tapestry, and this is reflected in the plurality of faith-based organisations. Amongst this world are friends of the MDGs and the ICPD. And it is to these friends – with a

legacy of engagement and service provision – that the international development world turns, as was the case over a quarter of a century ago, with other civil society organizations.

An important realisation from the mapping of FBO engagement undertaken by UNFPA from 2006-2008, is that even where headquarters of United Nations and development agencies were themselves too hesitant to engage with the faith-based sectors, some of the country or field-based offices did anyway. This was a natural evolution not necessarily always mandated by policy, but in most instances, because the realities on the ground required it, and it was strategic to realise their objectives.

PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLES:

1. *Strategic, issue-based alliances*
2. *A level playing field*
3. *Diversity of outreach*
4. *Clarity, accountability and consistency*
5. *South-South engagement and global continuity*

UNFPA believes that partnership with faith-based organisations is vital for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, Cairo, 1994), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, New York, 2000) and the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit (New York, 2005).

The legacy of engaging FBOs as cultural agents, complemented with recent initiatives, provides important opportunities to reflect on and formulate UNFPA's lessons learned and respective policy considerations around engaging FBOs, as part of its overall strategy to create conducive socio-cultural environments, and consolidate

partnerships for population and development. While continuing in-depth consultations and partnership outreach (within UNFPA, at the UN interagency level, and beyond), UNFPA is guided by the following 5 policy considerations:

1. Strategic issue-based alliances: focusing on the common ground (instead of divisive aspects) allows consideration of joint efforts to achieve the ultimate objectives captured in UNFPA's mission statement. This is realistic when focusing on specific issues. The common ground is a critical building block of these partnerships. UNFPA has found that leaders of faith - and interfaith - based organizations are open to discussing reproductive health, if issues are addressed with care and sensitivity. It is clear that women's equal rights, and reproductive rights in particular, are not usually the issues which generate consensus in the faith-based world – and especially not publicly. Nevertheless, UNFPA recognises the importance of rallying those within the faith-based communities who are already supportive of the common goals and

targets embodied in the ICPD PoA, are reflected in and reinforced by the MDGs, and have ongoing programmes to that effect. One effective approach has been to use scientific evidence, on issues such as infant and maternal mortality, violence against women, and HIV and AIDS prevalence rates for instance, to tap into ethical positions.

Moreover, none of these alliances have to be life-long partnerships. Each engagement is predicated upon certain circumstances and needs, and may well be, as per the discretion and consideration of the UNFPA Office, time-bound. This is a valid and necessary aspect of a strategic alliance, which also requires anticipating an exit strategy.

2. A level playing field: While UNFPA recognizes the differences between its mandate and approach and those of FBOs, it nevertheless seeks to cooperate as equal partners, depending on each other's comparative advantage and respective strengths. Partnering as equals also entails that neither side is utilized or perceived as a means, but both are relevant agents of action based on their different, and in many instances, complementary strengths. While the partnerships sought within the FBO community are expected to share the objectives of the ICPD-linked MDGs, UNFPA respects that they would reach these objectives differently – using their own language, networks and *modus operandi*. And in the meantime, UNFPA acknowledges that the diverse languages and methods require mutual understanding and sensitivity, at all times.

3. Diversity of outreach: UNFPA ensures that its outreach is multi-faith and balanced according to the religious diversity within communities, nations and globally. This is often made explicit in the terms of reference of the programmes. One of the lessons learned is that this multi-faith outreach approach cannot be implicit. UNFPA also recognizes that in order to identify like-minded partners and continuously enhance the modality and programme delivery, engaging with already established multi-faith organizations and communities which already work on an inter- and intra-faith basis is critical.

4. Clarity, accountability and consistency: As with any other partnership, UNFPA sets out clearly (in Memoranda of Understanding, joint proposals, or other project documents) the concrete outcomes expected of the joint endeavours. How the partnership falls within the parameters of the Strategic Plan (and its Global and Regional programmes), defines joint mechanisms of accountability, monitoring and evaluation, which are then discussed and on which agreement is reached. Moreover, the engagement with FBOs needs to be consistent, not a one-off, event-oriented alliance which creates false expectations. An engagement that is designed with a collective sense of ownership and responsibility for specific outcomes in mind, is also one that is sustainable. Together, clarity, accountability and consistency are essential for building the trust necessary to establish a legacy of realistic partnerships.

5. Throughout these partnerships, UNFPA maintains two important dimensions *and* targets of its commitment which significantly enrich the experience and inform the policy considerations:

✓ **South-South engagement:** Within each region, and amongst its five regions (e.g. Africa, Arab States, Asia and Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean), there is much scope for knowledge sharing, creation of knowledge networks, and the strengthening of alliances. Indeed, several UNFPA Country Offices expressed an interest in learning from other experiences of engaging FBOs and indeed, in strengthening their own networks of faith-based partners.

✓ **Global perspectives, comparisons and continuity:** There is much to be said for a continuous feedback loop where the national, regional and the global/international enrich one another. There are several cases where national and regional efforts at engagement have been informed by organizations which, at the global level, advocate against some aspects of the ICPD Programme of Action. Yet, there are other instances where some FBOs are actually finding very creative means to provide ICPD relevant services at the field levels, mandated by circumstances and needs. Such knowledge and comparison of engagements at the national, regional and international levels, i.e. feedback loops, enable better appreciation of FBO interventions, as well as grounding and sustainability of the partnerships formed.

STRATEGY

UNFPA's working definition of FBOs

Faith-based organisations are religious, faith-based groups, and/or faith-inspired groups which operate as registered or unregistered non-profit institutions. UNFPA partners with human rights-oriented FBOs which are service deliverers and/or advocates of the ICPD PoA areas.

The main goals of UNFPA in working with faith-based organizations therefore, are to:

1. Create a conducive socio-cultural environment (impacting on behaviour, attitudes and practices) to ultimately promote and mobilize key communities towards achieving the goals of the ICPD PoA and the MDGs; and
2. Strengthen the range of pro-ICPD agents and friends, through integrating various partnerships formed at the national, regional and global levels, formed to impact on

socio-cultural dynamics, policies and programmes which would further implement the ICPD PoA and the MDGs.

Generally, UNFPA will build on and expand its work with various national, regional and global interfaith Networks by participating in their meetings and providing funding, technical, logistical and other support for their activities. UNFPA will strengthen its partnership with faith-based organizations around three key areas: capacity building, knowledge sharing and advocacy, as follows:

Capacity Building

- Strengthening national, regional and the global FBO/Interfaith networks to bring them together with broader stakeholder coalitions which can support and endorse each other as well as UNFPA's mandate areas.
- Providing and facilitating trainings, workshops, and safe spaces around human-rights and rights-based approaches to programming.
- Securing the necessary resources through endorsing their integration in national development plans and development assistance programmes for population and development programmes, particularly for SRH and family planning (FP).

Knowledge Sharing

- Sharing and facilitating access to latest evidence-based knowledge and information amongst Interfaith Networks around sexual and reproductive health (SRH), gender equality (GE) and population and development (PD) issues.
- Documenting and updating information on partnerships between FBOs and UNFPA around SRH, GE and PD to ensure collation and analysis of lessons learned for enhanced respective outreach and advocacy.

Advocacy

- Integrating the Interfaith Network (at national, regional and international levels) in advocacy efforts for ICPD+15 together with other networks.
- Protecting and promoting the ICPD agenda and the work of UNFPA and its partners through countering misinformation campaigns and building social support within the governments for the ICPD.

More specifically, in programme countries, UNFPA's **Country Offices** will facilitate the creation of national Interfaith Networks on population and development in countries where they do not exist. The Country Offices will therefore continue to work closely with the national FBOs working on ICPD related issues and integrate them within other civil society outreach to create and nurture a favourable social environment for RH issues. This will be particularly strategic since most FBOs tend to be male-dominated (at the leadership levels) and therefore such Interfaith Networks also serve as an important means of engaging men in gender-equality

related initiatives. UNFPA Country Offices will also advocate for efforts by rights-oriented national FBOs to be involved in national development planning around population and development programmes.

In **donor countries**, UNFPA Headquarters and the Liaison Offices will strengthen their work with the global interfaith network to garner support for the further implementation of the ICPD PoA and the MDGs. They will also support efforts by members of the interfaith networks to promote awareness of population issues and build supportive coalitions. In addition, the UNFPA Headquarters and Liaison Offices will continue to provide interfaith network members with factual information on the ICPD agenda and the work of UNFPA and its partners to counter any misinformation.

At the **regional level**, UNFPA Headquarters, in collaboration with the Regional Offices (ROs), will promote dialogue and cooperation among FBOs by supporting sub-regional, regional and inter-regional consultations and capacity-building. It will continue to assist the regional FBO networks on population and development in enhancing RH-related service provision modalities and/or referral services, where necessary; and assisting with the development of models of best practices which could be adapted in different countries.

Finally, at the **global level**, UNFPA Headquarters will seek to coordinate and monitor FBO/Interfaith initiatives conducted at the national and regional levels in order to bring coherence to, maximize the impact of, and safeguard, the work of UNFPA and its partners with this critical constituency. It will continue to liaise at the interagency level, specifically around policies and strategies as regards FBO engagement. It will also develop mechanisms, such as a socio-cultural observatory, socio-cultural programme indicators, to monitor the impact of FBO engagement on creating an enabling environment and mobilizing resources for population and development. As the permanent secretariat for this Interfaith Network, UNFPA Headquarters will continue to keep FBOs informed, through the database and LISTSERV, of opportunities and progress being made on population funding, directions, policies and programmes.

The Istanbul Consensus
Principles of a Global Interfaith Network
for Population and Development [October 2008]

The gathered representatives of UNFPA and FBOs from around the world commit to:

- The principle that faiths share the same aims to safeguard the dignity and human rights of all people, women and men, young and old;
- Work together to advance human well-being and realize the rights of all individuals with attention to women and young people;
- Identify regional and national UNFPA-FBO focal points;
- Exchange experiences and learn from each other through the Interfaith Network;
- Ensure that FBO partners own the principles of the Network and maintain linkages with each other, with the support of UNFPA;
- Continue to maintain strong regional and national networks supported by UNFPA Country Offices, feeding into a Global Network facilitated by Headquarters, as a working modality to realize the ICPD mandate.

ANNEX IV - QUOTES

"It is not HIV that is killing us. It is the stigma attached to it."

Fagmeeda Miller, Positive Muslims, South Africa

"The experience of Iran shows that when religious scholars and UNFPA work together to solve reproductive health issues, there can be excellent results."

Malek Afzali, Islamic Republic of Iran

"Through gender-justice programming in the Church, we have created transformative spaces, safe spaces, grace spaces. Women have moved from being bearers of stereotypes to bearers of human rights."

Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Latin America and the Caribbean

"UNFPA has stepped up to the mark in providing human, logistical, and material resources to FBOs. Our combined work and shared agenda with UNFPA has strengthened our ability to reach into our local communities."

Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Latin America and the Caribbean

"Religious leaders act as bridges between the grassroots and the organisational level of UNFPA. If you access this bridge, you will be able to access the heart of the people you want to reach."

Sheikh Mohamed Gemea, Egypt

"Meaningful change will not happen until we work with international organisations such as UNFPA, because the issues we are facing are international issues, and require an international approach."

Ali Mansoob, Yemen

“The AIDS pandemic does distinguish between secularism and religion. As religious leaders we must also work on more than one level. We have to engage not only with theology and religious beliefs, but also with the secular development work of UNFPA.”

Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Palestinian Authority

“Faith-based organisations need to be honest about the gap that exists in most countries around the world between the age of sexual activity and the age of marriage. We need to get serious and talk about this reality.”

Rev. Blanca Armand Pilon, Uruguay

“We asked religious leaders – what are your reservations about development workers? And we asked development workers – what are your reservations about religious leaders? It turns out that most of the problems are not really problems at all, but rather mis-understandings, mis-conceptions, and mis-communications.”

Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, Masjid Council for Community Advancement, Bangladesh

“The Church provided the women with opportunities for economic empowerment. And as the women washed the clothes of people in their community, they washed away the stigma attached to their return from sexual slavery, and re-gained the respect of their community.”

Anastasiya Kryvitskaya, Christian Social Service, Belarus

“UNFPA is taking initiatives to create both spiritual and structural opportunities, and this creates spaces for the advancement of women all around the world.”

Fulya Vekiloglu, Bahai International Community

"After the tsunami, material items were not the only things that people needed. They also needed help to recover their minds. We need to have a holistic approach to humanitarian disasters, and this is why faith-based organisations and UNFPA must work together in the response."

Asanga Tilakaratne, Sri Lanka

"Enough is enough of giving speeches in the mosques and the churches. We have to be service deliverers. This is the time for building an interfaith humanitarian network."

Dr. Hany El-Banna, United Kingdom

"Having faith is not enough. When issues like HIV & AIDS knock on our door, we must respond with knowledge, and with action."

Rev. Pastor Pax Tan, Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore

"We must make sure that our faith is not only one that people hear or read about, but one that they can see, experience, feel, and touch."

Rev. Pastor Pax Tan, Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore

"All the Holy Books say that faith is nothing without action. And to engage in action, we have to engage with all our fellow human beings."

Fr. Paolous Serour, Orthodox Church in Egypt

ANNEX V - PHOTOGRAPHS

Press Conference



L-R: Interpreter, Sheikh Tayseer Tamini, Rev. Pax Tan, Mufti Sheikh Shaaban Mubaje, Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Sister Ngozi Uti, Interpreter.

Panel I: HIV and AIDS and Maternal Health



L-R : Fagmeed Miller, Mongia Nefzi Souahi, Malek Afzali, Hafedh Chekir, Djamal Frontbek Kzy, Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Geertje van Mensvoort.

Panel II: Youth and Migration



L-R: Bishop Meshak Mabuza, Mizouri Laroussi, Pastor John Wemin, Hajia Katumi Mahama, Karen Nazaryan, Hna Maria do Carmo dos Santos Goncalves, Jan Henningsson.

Panel III: Violence Against Women and Women's Empowerment



L-R: Fatou Diop, H.E. Nawal Faouri, Aminata Toure, Rev. Blanca Armand Pilon, Anastasiya Kryvitskaya, Sister Ngozi Uti, Mualana Abdul Kalam Azad.

Panel IV: Emergencies and Humanitarian Settings



L-R: Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Ignace Singirankabo, Asanga Tilakaratne, R.P. Rafael Castillo, Saleh Saeed, Fr. Octavian Mosin.

Panel V: Comparative UN Experiences with FBOs



L-R: Yamina Djacta, Sally Smith, Rosa Guerreiro, Stephen Hanmer, Khadija Moalla, Alex Ross, Pierre Martinot-Lagarde, Marc-Andre Dorel, Segolene Adam.

Panel VI: Sharing Consensus on Interfaith Networking with UNFPA



L-R: Jowaad Kezaala, Dr. Hany El-Banna, Sidiki Coulibaly, Rev. Pastor Pax Tan, Rev. Judith Van Osdol, Most Ven. Khambo Lama Dambajav, Sara Morello.



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