



# WORKBOOK

Religions for Peace   
9<sup>th</sup> WORLD ASSEMBLY







# Religions for Peace

## 9<sup>th</sup> WORLD ASSEMBLY

20-22 NOVEMBER 2013  
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

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# Introduction

The documents in this workbook provide background and context for the *Religions for Peace* 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly. The first is the Assembly Theme Paper, which focuses on “***Welcoming the Other: A Multi-Religious Vision of Peace***.” It is followed by the background papers for the following four Commissions:

1. ***Welcoming the Other through Conflict Prevention and Transformation***
2. ***Welcoming the Other through Just and Harmonious Societies***
3. ***Welcoming the Other through Human Development that Respects the Earth***
4. ***Welcoming the Other through Religious and Multi-Religious Education***

These papers are intended to serve as catalysts for Assembly participants to identify issues of common concern and suggestions for collaborative action on the national, regional and global levels of the *Religions for Peace* (RfP) network.

The papers do not attempt to define their respective fields; rather, each one provides a brief survey of the global challenges we face and the actual and potential roles that religious communities can play in responding to them. Though there are many wonderful works that the religious communities have been undertaking, only a few cases have been cited in this Workbook as illustrative examples to further spark discussions and sharing during the Assembly.

“***Welcoming the Other: A Multi-Religious Vision of Peace***” has been written by the International Secretariat working under the direction of the Executive Committee.

Our appreciation goes to the principal writers of the Commission preparatory papers – Dr. Nigel Crawhall, Prof. Dr. Johannes Lähnemann, Dr. Patricia Moccia, Dr. Chris Seiple and Dr. David Steel. We would also like to thank all those within the RfP network and beyond who provided valuable inputs and feedback in preparation of this Workbook.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the GHR Foundation for its support for these documents.

We hope that these papers are a helpful resource during and after your participation in this 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly.



## ASSEMBLY THEME PAPER

Welcoming the Other:

# A Multi-Religious Vision of Peace







## INTRODUCTION

Since its first World Assembly in 1970, *Religions for Peace* (RfP) has convened representatives of the world's religious communities to foster collaborative action for Peace.

Representing diverse faith traditions and every region of the world, over 600 religious leaders will convene in Vienna, Austria, in November 2013 as the 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*.<sup>1</sup> Assembly delegates will come from the RfP network of ninety national inter-religious councils and groups, five regional councils, one world council and global networks of religious women and religious youth. Delegates include Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Shinto, Zoroastrian religious leaders. *Religions for Peace* is the world's largest multi-religious organization.

Each religious tradition represented in RfP has its own positive vision of Peace, which includes its understanding of human dignity, individual and communal flourishing, the obligation to be in harmony with others and the natural world, and its notion of ultimate fulfillment. In RfP, each religion's positive vision of Peace is respected as being sincerely held by the believers of that religion. While great care is taken to avoid a "syncretistic" blending of the beliefs of diverse religions, RfP recognizes that diverse religious visions of Peace do provide the bases for carefully discerning elements of a positive, multi-religious vision of Peace.

From its beginning, RfP has labored to discern and express elements of a shared positive vision of Peace. This is done by discerning and expressing consensus through shared values, rather than in terms of the differing doctrines that are unique to each religious tradition. Elements of a shared positive vision of Peace have been discerned and expressed in all previous RfP Assemblies.

Each religious community's positive vision of Peace not only provides pointers to and offers glimpses of Peace to its followers, it also helps those believers to bring into the light the profound gaps, contradictions and personal and social failures that mark human experience. From its beginning, RfP has labored to build a values-based consensus on the major threats to Peace, such as war and the vast proliferation of arms, extreme poverty, environmental degradation, preventable child mortality and thwarted childhood development, and major abuses of human dignity and human rights.

Ultimately, an emergent consensus on shared positive elements of Peace is related to an emergent consensus on the threats to Peace. While the elements of a shared positive vision of Peace give helpful direction on the ways forward, they also bring into bold relief the major threats to Peace.

Since its founding, RfP has been committed to taking concrete action to build Peace based on consensus achieved in terms of shared values. Action can be focused on positive efforts to build up a shared positive notion of Peace, or it can be focused on addressing the threats to Peace. Typically, RfP action programs involve or at least imply both dimensions.

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<sup>1</sup> *Religions for Peace* is grateful to the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) for its generous partnership in the Assembly.



Every *RfP* structure – from global to local – is a platform for action for building Peace. Importantly, advancing Peace today – including addressing the threats to Peace – is simultaneously a local, national, regional and global challenge. A great strength of *RfP* is that it can tackle these problems in a complementary and coordinated fashion.

The 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* will address the urgent need to “*Welcome the Other*” through multi-religious action. In Vienna, Assembly participants will share examples of multi-religious action to ensure human dignity, promote citizenship and advance shared well-being. By collaborating on shared positive elements of Peace grounded in diverse faith traditions, *RfP* seeks to counter the rising tide of hostility toward the “other.”

## I. DISCERNING PEACE

Previous World Assemblies of *Religions for Peace* (1970, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2006) have discerned both positive elements of Peace and common threats to Peace, shared by our respective religious traditions. The following two sections, *Shared Elements of Peace* and *Threats to Peace*, have drawn extensively from these *RfP* World Assembly Declarations.

### SHARED ELEMENTS OF PEACE

#### Peace as Central to Our Different Religions

Peace is central to each of our respective religions. Each – in its own way – both knows and anticipates Peace to be a holistic state of personal and social existence that is far more than the mere absence of conflict. Each of us comes to *RfP* committed to the foundation for peacemaking found within his or her respective religious tradition. We believe that a special charge has been given to all men and women of religion to be concerned with all their hearts with peacemaking. Each of our religions has its own way of calling for a “change of heart” that can nourish a spirit of sacrifice, humility, and self-restraint essential to building Peace.

#### Shared Commitment to Peace

Our respective faiths compel us to work together to build Peace. Together, we will advance the common good and search for solutions to common problems. We are resolved to serve together, each in the way most keeping with the convictions of his or her spiritual family and local circumstances. We will engage our respective religious resources to help us bring Peace within our own hearts, among our religious communities, among nations and with the natural world.





## **With Hope**

Our shared commitment to Peace is made full of hope, despite the heavy legacy of past violence, grave peril of the present and anxious uncertainty of the future. Our religions teach us that Peace is possible. Sustained and motivated by our respective spiritual traditions, we believe that love, compassion, selflessness and inner truthfulness are more powerful than hate. The spiritual resources of our religious traditions give us strength to dedicate ourselves to the tasks ahead.

## **Acknowledgement of Failures of Religious Practice and Misuse of Religions**

We confess in humility and penitence that religious believers have very often betrayed their commitments to Peace. With deep sadness, we acknowledge that our religions have all too often been misused in support of nonreligious purposes, including cultural and political violence. We reject the misuse of religion as a pretext for violence and terrorism and we re-commit ourselves to the authentic Peace teachings of our respective religious traditions.

## **Human Dignity and Oneness of Humanity**

We affirm a common humanity in which all men and women are recognized as human beings endowed with inalienable dignity, and with rights and responsibilities that flow from that dignity. We recognize that each of our respective religious traditions has its own understanding of the foundation of human dignity and common humanity, whether these are perceived as God-given, a reflection of divine nature, derived from cosmic laws, or understood as an inherent sacredness or oneness with the universe. By affirming our common humanity, we are also able to affirm our other forms of identity, such as religion, race, age, sex, ethnicity and status, as part of the wonderful diversity of human life.

## **Obligation to Stand on the Side of Those Denied Rights, the Poor and Oppressed**

Our religious traditions call us to care for one another and to treat the problems faced by others as our own. The vulnerability of each person calls us to respond to the vulnerability of all. Beyond that, our religious communities know that they are especially called to stand on the side of the most vulnerable, including those denied rights, the poor and the oppressed.

*Those Denied Rights:* We affirm our religiously rooted commitments to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We recognize these rights as a foundation for a just and human society. Human rights are an essential part of the total and holistic Peace we seek. We build trust through the protection and preservation of human rights, including religious freedom, for all peoples. The love of Peace is incompatible with the violation of basic human rights.

*The Poor:* Development is integral to Peace. We recognize that we have a religious obligation to stand on the side of the poor. We can build trust by the creation of economic systems that can help provide for the well-being of all and that conserve and respect the ecological balances of nature. We are committed to the legal empowerment of the poor, who are too often excluded from the legal benefits of citizenship in their own states due to the lack of legal registration. And, we are committed to the elimination of extreme poverty, which shackles the efforts of countless poor to lift themselves out of poverty.



*The Oppressed:* We are called to protect the weak from the oppressive domination of the strong. Only a truly free people can constitute a productive and cooperative society. We have a vision of a world in which international relations are more just, and in which the armaments necessary to maintain these structures can be safely reduced.

## **Conflict Resolution**

War and violent conflict are preventable. Their prevention requires both practical and spiritual efforts. In the practical realm, we advocate for justice and we recognize the ideal of non-violent means of conflict resolution. In the spiritual realm, we need to advance reconciliation, which requires a willingness to repent, to ask for and grant forgiveness, and to acknowledge that the purpose of historical remembrance is not to sow the seeds of future conflict, but to ensure that the evils of the past are never repeated. While some religious communities have teachings that can be described as *just war* theories, these recognize that war is a last resort and represents a failure to resolve conflict non-violently. Building trust for conflict resolution depends on mutual dependence rather than on mutual terror.

## **Disarmament, including Weapons of Mass Destruction**

With one voice, from our various traditions of faith, we insist that nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction are immoral and criminal, and that stockpiling such weapons with the intent or threat to use them erodes the very foundation of moral civilization. We recognize the relationship between disarmament and development. Disarmament can free resources for development and the proper investment of our energies in life and the future.

## **Women**

We affirm that all human beings are born free, that they are equal in dignity and rights, and that discrimination on the grounds of sex is incompatible with human dignity. Religious women are, first and foremost, irreplaceable and co-equal partners in peacebuilding. All believers – men and women alike – share the responsibility to address violence against women.

## **Children**

The sacredness of life, honored in our religious traditions, founds our belief in the ultimate meaning and value of the child. The sacredness of life compels us to be a voice of conscience. The grim realities of needless child deaths, under-development and exploitation demand our outrage because they exist; they demand our repentance because they have been silently tolerated or even justified; they demand our response because all can be addressed. Our traditions inform us that societies will be judged ultimately by the condition of their most innocent, most dependent and most vulnerable members – their children. Children's rights belong in the mainstream of human rights. Educating children about the beliefs and values of their own religious tradition and those of others is of paramount importance in seeking a peaceful world. Families are the first educators of children, and should be supported, sustained and strengthened by their respective religious communities. Our children are the most visible sign of that which binds us together in the human family.





## Environment

The creation of a harmonious relationship between mankind and nature is an indispensable part of the struggle for Peace. Religious people know that they are called to stand with the poorest and weakest members of society. Today, we must extend this concept of solidarity to the environment. We are interdependent, not only with other humans but also with the entire natural world. We are committed to sustainable development, which includes living in harmony with nature.

### **A Culture of Peace, Common Healing, Common Living and Shared Security**

*A Culture of Peace:* We are committed to building a Global Culture of Peace in which the diversity of cultures can be affirmed and celebrated, just as the commonalities are shared and celebrated.

*Common Healing:* The power of healing must come from religious and other ethical and spiritual resources. Healing is evident where, after long struggle, injustice is being transformed to justice, oppression to freedom, discrimination to equity and violence to Peace.

*Common Living:* Our shared religious ethics make us responsible for our neighbors and those in need; they help us draw on our respective religious sources of love, duty and responsibility as the foundations that undergird the establishment of justice.

*Common Security:* Common security requires a holistic understanding of interdependence between all peoples and the natural world. Security is more than the elimination of armaments. The security of some can never be permanently achieved by creating insecurity for others. A proper sense of security requires both trust and the risk of shared vulnerability. Walls can never be high enough to insulate us from the impacts of the genuine needs and vulnerabilities of others. No nation can be secure while other nations are threatened. We are no safer than the most vulnerable among us. The ethical convictions of our diverse religious traditions provide a foundation for suggesting a vision of shared security. Shared security requires all sectors of society to acknowledge our common vulnerabilities and our shared responsibility to address them.

### **Special Partnership with the UN**

We recognize that the United Nations has committed itself to many of the shared elements of Peace that we have identified. We urge that the UN be strengthened and we commit to principled partnership with it.



## SHARED THREATS TO PEACE

The following are deeply held and widely shared expressions of threats to Peace taken from the *RfP* Assembly Declarations. These same threats to Peace have been further elaborated in Assembly Commission Papers.

### Failures of Religious Practice

The practices of our religious communities are often a divisive force in the world. We – and the members of our communities – often fail to practice our respective tradition's deepest commitments to Peace. Moreover, we have done too little to build inter-religious understanding and community among ourselves on the local level where prejudices run strong.

### Religion Hijacked and Misused

Religion is being abused in support of violent threats to Peace – by extremists using religion to incite violence and hatred, by unscrupulous politicians manipulating sectarian differences for their own ends, by those seeking to exploit victims of poverty and human rights abuse, and by the sensationalist media scapegoating religion in situations of conflict.

In ongoing violent conflicts around the world, religion is being used as a justification or excuse for violence. We must regretfully accept that some groups within our religious communities have indeed sought to employ violence.

### Spiritual Crisis

Great dangers and deep pain remain in the uncertainty of our age. Our global society suffers a spiritual crisis so deep that positive changes are prevented. As the search for identity accentuates long-repressed differences among peoples, disintegration and exaggerated individualism threaten the international order. In response, we call not for an uncompromising secularism but for authentic religion, which we believe must be a powerful force for human rights, freedom and non-violent political transformation. The impulse of religion must be toward Peace, not war.

Forces that negate human dignity are strong and all around us. The spirit of sacrifice, humility and self-restraint, which will further respect for human dignity and advance justice, development, freedom and Peace, is needed. Religious people have too often failed to take the lead in speaking to the most important ethical and moral issues of our day and more importantly, in taking steps toward change.

Religious groups must avoid the danger of becoming instruments of economic, social or political agendas, thus losing their spiritual-prophetic dynamism.





## **Conflicts, Violence and Proliferation of Arms**

We live in a world in the grip of many forms of violence, both direct and structural. Violent conflict, including war and terror, persists. Disarmament remains an urgent need as dangers of armament and its proliferation continue. Resources that could be spent on development are being poured into research, manufacture and stockpiling of such weapons – conventional, nuclear and chemical. In particular, we note the twin menace of deadly nuclear weapons and desperate national insecurity.

The conflict characteristic of the Cold War has given way to today's conflicts fueled by nationalistic, ethnic and religious forces. The destructive impacts of these conflicts are heightened by the increased destructiveness of the arms that are readily available. The instruments of international peacemaking and peacekeeping are not sufficiently developed to facilitate the resolution of conflict.

Perpetuation of the memory of grievances and suffering is constantly recalled and even exploited.

## **Political, Economic and Social Injustices and Turmoil (Inequity and Inequality)**

Many states are experiencing decreasing social cohesion, leading to increased violence and weakened abilities to achieve moral consensus across group lines.

Human rights abuses and social and cultural violence threaten people around the world. Tyrannical systems and elitist ruling groups prevent multitudes of people from participating in the shaping of their own future. People living in societies ruled by sheer power unlimited by impartial law are subject to grave abuses of their civil and political rights and the refusal of social, economic or cultural justice.

Socially recognized divisions can set individual against individual, group against group, majorities and minorities against each other, resulting in inclusion or exclusion, privilege or denial, dignity or deprivation. The rights embodied in international legal instruments can never be realized apart from the actualization of the common ethics embodied in all religious traditions.

## **Disenfranchisement of Women, Children and Families**

The rights and well-being of women, children and families are constantly in jeopardy. Discrimination, repression, denial of opportunity, oppressions, exploitation and exclusion – all such violations of human rights are debasing these groups and civilization at large. There is a need for women's equal participation not only in family life, but also in the leadership of communities and social and political institutions.

Systemic inequities in the distribution of opportunities and resources persist between men and women in all countries. We are to be held accountable for the impact of violence, including that which occurs in our own homes, in war and in conflicts among religious groups. We are to be held accountable for the victimization of children – through child labor, sexual exploitation, and forced military service.



## Poverty, Diseases and Lack of Opportunities

Extreme poverty and global health remain obstacles to building Peace. The absence of sufficient meaningful employment and the continued marginalization of many people mark societies worldwide.

Famine and disease have accompanied violence. HIV and AIDS have reached epidemic proportion throughout the world.

We are to be held accountable for the ravages of poverty on children – malnutrition, the toll of preventable diseases, stunted growth, lack of education and opportunity, and the denial of hope.

## Environmental Degradation, Natural Resource Depletion and Natural Calamities

The earth is threatened increasingly by human exploitation and misuse of the environment in quest of material prosperity. Human greed is destroying the natural environment on which we all depend. We are endangering future generations by our depletion of nonrenewable natural resources, our pollution of air and water with chemical and radioactive waste, and our over-exploitation of the soil in many parts of the world.

We are to be held accountable for the destruction of our children's inheritance as the environment is permanently damaged and non-renewable resources are consumed.

## II. RISING HOSTILITY

“ Shared security requires all sectors of society to acknowledge our common vulnerabilities and our shared responsibility to address them.

— Kyoto Declaration on Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security, *Religions for Peace* 8<sup>th</sup> World Assembly (2006)

Since *Religions for Peace* last assembled in 2006, an alarming trend with tremendous implications for achieving Peace has accelerated worldwide. A rising tide of hostility, in society and within and among religious communities, threatens the shared security people of faith are working to achieve.

Hostility toward the “other” takes the form of intolerance, and too often violence. The targets of hostility are often vulnerable populations, including members of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, refugees, migrant workers, and immigrants. Hostilities arise from all sectors of society – governments, individuals, organizations and social groups. A growing number of governments are placing restrictions on religious beliefs and practices by minority religious groups. Attempts to contain the spread of fanaticism often breed greater hostility.

Regretfully, some groups within our own religious communities misuse religion to foster hostility toward others. Sectarian and communal violence is dividing societies, fueling violent conflict, and destroying innocent lives. Harassment, intimidation and abuse are aimed at the most vulnerable





populations among us. Prejudices within our own religious communities are particularly troubling. By impugning the dignity of others, members of our own religious traditions are contradicting the most sacred tenets of their own faith tradition.

Intolerance and violence in all manifestations are obstacles to Peace. Religious communities, leaders and people of faith must confront hostility toward the “other” as an obstacle to our shared security and a profound threat to Peace.

## INTOLERANCE

There is a strong tide against tolerance and respect for human dignity on all continents. Intolerance is increasingly reflected in the laws, policies and actions of governments worldwide.

Governmental restrictions on individuals and groups, often rationalized on the basis of security threats, fuel intolerance and fear of the “other,” and threaten human dignity, good governance and shared well-being.

Governmental restrictions on religion are proliferating. By one measure, three-quarters of the world’s population now live in countries with high levels of restrictions on religion.<sup>2</sup> The percentage of countries with high levels of governmental restrictions on religion has increased from 29 percent in 2007 to 40 percent in 2011.<sup>3</sup>

Official restrictions on religious beliefs and practices take many forms. These include:

- › Banning particular faiths;
- › Imprisoning religious leaders;
- › Placing restrictions on religious minorities;
- › Stigmatizing religious groups as dangerous sects or cults;
- › Criminalizing religious conversion;
- › Desecrating holy sites, places of worship and religious symbols;
- › Restricting religious literature or broadcasting;
- › Discriminating against religious groups in employment, education and housing; and
- › Failing to protect individuals from religious discrimination, harassment or abuse by private individuals and groups.

In addition to the above list, there remain powerful and divergent views among diverse governments regarding the criminalization of blasphemy versus the protection of freedom of speech.<sup>4</sup>

At a time when many countries are undergoing major political changes, in many countries progress toward democracy is coupled with attacks on minorities.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion*, (September 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, *supra* n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> In this context, it is important to note the historic achievement of United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 (12 April 2011) on the need to adopt “measures to criminalize incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief,” in the context of re-affirming all fundamental freedoms of religion and belief. The successor General Assembly Resolution UN GA Res. 66/166 was unanimously adopted on 19 December 2011. The *RfP* Middle East-North African Council has formally moved to receive HR Res. 1618 as a shared basis for elements of its collaborative work.



Governmental counter-strategies against rising religious extremism often exacerbate hostility. Attempting to curb terrorism worldwide, fundamental principles of human rights are often violated by states, fostering greater insecurity. Efforts to combat extremism often contribute to the demonization of entire groups, resulting in the loss of fundamental freedoms.

Social hostility toward individuals and groups, fuelled by intolerance and fear of the “other,” also threaten human dignity, good governance and shared well-being. Growing social hostilities include:

- › Social harassment and stigmatization of religious groups, minorities and other vulnerable populations;
- › Religious groups enforcing their religious norms on others.

There is a correlation between government restrictions on religion and social hostility among religious communities. The growth of governmental restrictions is accompanied by increased measures of social hostility.<sup>5</sup> A recent study has found that the correlation exists most strongly where governmental restrictions favor one religion over others, and where social hostility takes the form of sectarian violence.<sup>6</sup>

## VIOLENCE

“ As people of religious conviction, we hold the responsibility to effectively confront violence within our own communities whenever religion is misused as a justification or excuse for violence.

— Kyoto Declaration on Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security, *Religions for Peace* 8<sup>th</sup> World Assembly (2006)

Intolerance often leads to violence.

The number of countries experiencing sectarian or communal violence between religious groups is growing. Social hostility toward religion, religious communities and individuals of faith takes the form of:

- › Religion-related armed conflict or terrorism;
- › Mob or sectarian violence;
- › The use of violence by private actors in the name of religion;
- › Religion-related harassment, intimidation or abuse (over attire for religious reasons, for example); and
- › Malicious acts and crimes inspired by religious bias (harassment and intimidation; displacement from homes; destruction of holy sites; abductions; physical abuse; killings).

<sup>5</sup> Correlation is not necessarily causation.

<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center, *supra* n. 2.





### III. WELCOMING THE OTHER

There may be an emerging multi-religious consensus that a shared positive vision of Peace calls on all people of faith to “*Welcome the Other*.” “*Welcoming the Other*” includes robust support for tolerance. Diverse faith traditions promote tolerance for the “other” in both law and society and on a more basic level in their cultivation of an essential existential respect for the other. “*Welcoming the Other*” calls each religious community to robustly advance tolerance. “*Welcoming the Other*” also calls each religious community to go beyond tolerance by pro-actively standing in solidarity with the dignity, vulnerability and well-being of the “other,” with the full force of its respective spiritual and moral teachings. Such teachings can include the willingness to bear innocent suffering, return good for evil, forgive the unforgivable and cultivate unrestricted compassion or love for enemies.

#### TOLERANCE

“ Tolerance is an active recognition of diversity and means respecting the otherness of the other with whom we differ religiously, culturally, or otherwise, with compassion and benevolence.

— European Council of Religious Leaders, *Religions for Peace Declaration on Tolerance: Our Commitment to Justice, Equality and Sharing* (2010)

“ Tolerance is not only a cherished principle, but also a necessity for peace and for the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

— UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (1995)

“ Tolerance is one of the fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century and should include the active promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, with human beings respecting one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language, neither fearing nor repressing differences within and between societies but cherishing them as a precious asset of humanity.

— UN Millennium Declaration (2000)<sup>7</sup>

The true nature of tolerance, its full implication, is perhaps best understood by its opposites: the ugly faces of intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, marginalization, and deprivation that shape the daily life of hundreds of millions even today. Victims of intolerance are the stigmatized “others.” The “other” is the stranger, the alien, the person from a different culture, faith tradition or nation. The “other” may be discriminated against because of gender, poverty, race, faith, color, physical or mental status, caste or culture. Today’s struggle for a culture of Peace and civilization of universal brotherhood must address the prevailing conflict between tolerance and intolerance.

Tolerance means not imposing one’s views on others; in short, essential existential respect for the “other.”

<sup>7</sup> UN Resolution on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, UN doc. A/RES/56/6 (21 Nov. 2001) (recalling the UN Millennium Declaration, UN doc. A/RES/55/2 (8 Sept. 2000)).



“ Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human.... Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

— UNESCO Declaration, Art. 1.1

Promoting tolerance must not be confused as a proxy for lack of conviction, indifference or neglecting one’s values.

“ Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence.... The practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one’s convictions.

— UNESCO Declaration, Arts. 1.2, 1.4

“ Conflicting interests and views are not in themselves a threat to peace. They present a challenge to creatively harmonise different interests. In a culture of peace everyone should strive to transform situations of conflicting interest so that their power and dynamism are channeled into creative development which promotes peace and harmony.”

— European Council of Religious Leaders, *Religions for Peace Lille Declaration on a Culture of Peace* (2009)

Tolerance is at the heart and center of other fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and freedom of assembly.

“ Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others.

— UNESCO Declaration, Art. 1.2


Tolerance is embedded in both national and international law. In national law, states promote tolerance through just and impartial legislation, law enforcement, judicial process, and administration; and by making economic and social opportunities available to each person without discrimination. Nondiscrimination is a core principle of international law reflected in the United Nations Charter,<sup>8</sup> and international human rights declarations and treaties.

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, for example, declares “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (Art. 1) and “everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth ... without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” (Art. 2).<sup>9</sup> Rights contained in the Universal Declaration that promote tolerance include the rights of everyone to “freedom of thought, conscience and religion,” including “freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (Art. 18); “freedom of opinion and expression” (Art. 19); to recognition as

8 “The Purposes of the United Nations are ... to achieve international cooperation in ... promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion....” UN Charter (1945), Art. 1.

9 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).





a person before the law (Art. 6); to equal protection of the law (Art. 7); to a nationality (Art. 16); and to education that “shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.” (Art. 26)

“ Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law.

— UNESCO Declaration, Art. 1.3

*RfP* in the past has affirmed its support for national governance and international norms that promote tolerance, and for the cultivation of an essential existential respect for the other.

As men and women of faith, however, our faith traditions also call us to take a step beyond tolerance. A positive multi-religious notion of Peace – rooted in our respective religious traditions – goes beyond state-centered legal regimes and the cultivation of an essential existential respect for the other, however enduringly important these remain. Our respective faith traditions call for profound active solidarity with the “other.”

## FAITH-BASED IMPERATIVES

### Indigenous Spiritualities

According to the ancestral teachings of Indigenous Peoples – transmitted across generations – all human beings are the children of Mother Earth and the Universe. Together and complementing each other, we are to walk the sacred path of life.

Living well implies knowing how to live in harmony and in balance, first of all with our own self, with peoples living in communities close to us, and then with others – people of diverse cultural and faith traditions. Furthermore, it is essential to live in harmony and balance with Mother Earth and all life that exists.

Living well in community with others implies complementing each other, practicing values such as reciprocity and sharing. Reciprocity establishes a balance in the relationships among people; it is an important component for the establishment of harmony and generates a sense of equality among human beings.

Living well and “*Welcoming the Other*” cannot be achieved through individualism, but by recognizing that we are all connected and responsible for the life we are creating for ourselves, others in these times and for future generations.

— A spiritual leader in conversation with the *RfP* Secretary General



## Hinduism

Hinduism “welcomes the other” by advancing the virtue of respecting all religions that includes embracing a notion of citizenship, striving for Peace and gender equality. Hindu teachings include:

- › *Sarvadharmasambhava* (“Equal attitude toward all religions.”) This implies religious tolerance.
- › *Ahimsa paramo dharmah* (“Non-violence is the highest religious duty.”) This means that we must renounce violence and instead follow the path of Peace.
- › *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (“The whole of the earth/globe is a family.”) This means that all the people living in all parts of the globe are a big loving family.
- › *Yatra Narayas tu pujoyante ramante tatra Devata /Yatrais tu na Pujayante Sarvas tatraphalah Kriyah* (“The gods reside at the place where the female is worshipped and all activities are unsuccessful where no respect for females exists.”) This means that women should enjoy equal rights with men and be given the full freedoms, rights and respect that that entails.<sup>10</sup>

In Hindu culture, interdependence and interconnectedness are considered the foundation of well-being. The world is to be seen as one family and the implication here is that there is a collective responsibility for community and societal issues.

Actions that weaken the community diminish the individual. Equally, the community is strengthened by the contributions of the individual. People work together to care and provide for each other, rather than focus on individual needs

## Buddhism

Buddhism teaches that the very distinction between one group and another, between insider and outsider, between citizen and alien, is a dangerous illusion. The renowned Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, teaches that in Buddhism there is no such thing as an individual self.<sup>11</sup> His point is that we are so profoundly interconnected by history, culture and biology that the very notion of a separate individual is a false illusion. Radical awareness, understood as awakening or enlightenment, reveals authentic human existence in the selflessness of the Buddha.

In the Buddhist tradition, our connections are meaningful; our separations are an illusion. When we believe in the illusion of separation, not only do we deceive ourselves, but we follow a path that will bring us great suffering. If you and I are ultimately awakened, we recognize that you cannot be the “other.” You cannot be an alien, a foreigner. When we are awakened, there is “no self” to be separated from the “other.”

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10 Swaamee Aprtemaanandaa, Jee, “*The Respect for all Religions*” (September, 2012), available at: <http://www.trcb.com/religion/hinduism/the-respect-for-all-religions-peace-global-citizenship>.

11 Thich Nhat Hanh, “*Being Peace*,” 2005.





## Judaism

The book of Leviticus, the third book in the Hebrew bible, states, “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”<sup>12</sup> This passage has been interpreted as welcoming the “other” living among us and asserting the oneness of human kind and the almightiness of God.

“There shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you.”<sup>13</sup> Moses gives God’s law: “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”<sup>14</sup> “You shall not strip your vineyards bare ... leave them for the poor and the alien.”<sup>15</sup>

The Biblical principle of welcoming and protecting the stranger was not without historical context. According to Joshua, and throughout Jewish history, Jewish refugees have been joined by non-Jews also fleeing drought, famine, slavery, persecution and invaders.<sup>16</sup> The duty of protecting strangers vulnerable to xenophobic violence was an important principle for Jews during biblical times and remains so today. As Rabbi Hillel, the great teacher of the first century A.D. replied when accepting a challenge from a non-Jew to recite the entire Torah while standing on one foot, “What is hateful to you do not do to others. That is the whole Torah, all the rest is commentary.”<sup>17</sup>

## Christianity

In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to “*Welcome the Other*” for “What you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do unto me.”<sup>18</sup> “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God .... We love because God first loved us.”

Affirming the paramount Jewish imperative of “love of God and love of neighbor,” Jesus taught in the Parable of the Good Samaritan that the religious “other” (the Samaritan) was a true neighbor when he assisted a man found beaten and bleeding on the road. In the teaching, Jesus tells his interlocutor (a Jewish lawyer) to “go and do the same yourself.”<sup>19</sup>

Jesus told his followers that when they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and those in prison, they were doing it to him. When they failed to do those things, they failed to serve him.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Biblos*, Leviticus 19:33-34.

<sup>13</sup> *Biblos*, Exodus 12:49, Leviticus 24:22.

<sup>14</sup> *Biblos*, Exodus 12:21, 23:9.

<sup>15</sup> *Biblos*, Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22.

<sup>16</sup> *Biblos*, Joshua 9:3-27.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR 2012 Dialogue on Faith and Protection “*The Protection of Refugees under Jewish Law: a short introduction.*”

<sup>18</sup> *The Bible*, Matthew 25:40.

<sup>19</sup> *The Bible*, Luke 10: 29-37.

<sup>20</sup> *The Bible*, Matthew 25:45.



## Islam

In the Holy *Qur'an*, the importance of “*Welcoming the Other*” is clearly stated: “O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made “you nations and tribes that ye may know one another.”<sup>21</sup> The *Qur'an* teaches that believers should “serve God ... and do good to ... neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing].”<sup>22</sup>

In 662 AD, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) fled persecution in Mecca and sought refuge in Medina. This *hijrah*, or migration, came to symbolize the movement of Muslims from lands of oppression to those of Islam. Moreover, the hospitable treatment of Muhammad by the people of Medina embodies the Islamic model of “*Welcoming the Other*” contained in the *Qur'an*. This responsibility is formalized in the fourth *surah* of the Holy *Qur'an*, which states that: “He who emigrates in the path of God will find frequent refuge and abundance.”<sup>23</sup>

## AN EMERGING MULTI-RELIGIOUS CONSENSUS

Diverse religious traditions make clear – each in their own way – that it is a fundamental religious duty, privilege and experience of fulfillment to “*Welcome the Other*.” Respecting each particular religion’s way of grounding its imperative to “*Welcome the Other*,” we are invited to discern “*Welcoming the Other*” as an element of the emergent RfP multi-religious positive vision of Peace. So understood, the commitment to “*Welcome the Other*” calls diverse religious believers to advance tolerance in the domains of law and state practice as well as in their existential orientation to others. “*Welcoming the Other*” also calls religious believers to a profound and proactive solidarity for the well-being of others with the full force of their respective spiritual and moral imperatives.

Is “*Welcoming the Other*” a “deeply held and widely shared” value among diverse religious communities? The Assembly is uniquely qualified to discern this urgent and timely question

## ADVANCING HUMAN DIGNITY, SHARED WELL-BEING AND CITIZENSHIP

Our religious communities are essential actors to “*Welcome the Other*.” They can work to reverse the rising tide of intolerance by powerfully advancing tolerance. And they can go further: They are called to commit themselves in solidarity to the well-being of the other in accord with the full force of their respective religious traditions, which include such teachings as – each tradition on its own terms – voluntary renunciations self-sacrifice for the well-being of others, bearing innocent suffering, returning good for evil, forgiving the “unforgivable,” and offering unrestricted compassion or love for enemies.

Each religious community’s efforts to “*Welcome the Other*” through advocacy, education and other forms of action have profound and inestimable worth.

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21 The *Qur'an*, Al-Hujurat 39:13.

22 The *Qur'an*, Al-Hujurat 4:36.

23 The *Qur'an*, Al-Hujurat 4:97-99.





Multi-religious efforts can complement the work of individual religious communities to “*Welcome the Other*.” Cooperation creates connections among religious communities that can greatly reduce the temptation to misuse religion as a false rationale for intolerance or violence. Cooperation also harnesses the different capacities of diverse religious communities in common problem solving, provides efficiency in areas of needed training, and positions religious communities for multi-stakeholder partnerships.

In particular, *Religions for Peace* can “*Welcome the Other*” through multi-religious action for human dignity, for shared well-being, and for a more robust notion of citizenship.

### WELCOMING THE OTHER BY ADVANCING HUMAN DIGNITY

From its beginning, *Religions for Peace* has discerned a shared conviction on the central importance of human dignity. This is affirmed in the first and succeeding World Assemblies and in a wide variety of *Religions for Peace* fora.<sup>24</sup>

Advancing human dignity “*welcomes the Other*” when we work to honor and protect human dignity whenever or wherever it is affronted. On the other hand, “*Welcoming the Other*” also implies more than the recognition of human dignity and the obligation to honor the rights that flow from it. “*Welcoming the Other*” includes the commitment to stand in solidarity with the positive flourishing of the “other’s” human dignity. As religious communities, we are called to both protect human dignity and to advance its full flourishing through the comprehensive development of human beings on all levels: physical, intellectual, affective, artistic, moral and religious. “*Welcoming the Other*” includes the proactive commitment to help the “other” to develop and unfold his or her human dignity in the holistic terms of a shared positive vision of Peace rooted in each believer’s religious tradition.

### WELCOMING THE OTHER BY ADVANCING SHARED WELL-BEING

At the first Assembly of *RfP*, the religious leaders discerned a shared consensus not only on human dignity, but also on the conviction on “the unity of the human family.” Subsequent Assemblies have reinforced the notion of the unity of the human family by advancing the conviction that diverse religious traditions – each in its own way – teach their respective believers to care for others as themselves. These notions were further developed in Assemblies dealing expressly with themes related to shared well-being: “Common Healing” (1994), “Common Living” (1999) and “Shared Security” (2006).

In Kyoto, our 8<sup>th</sup> World Assembly (2006) recognized that the moral convictions of diverse religious traditions provide a foundation for confronting violence in its many forms and advancing a vision of shared security. Affirming the imperative to “*Welcome the Other*” by advancing shared well-being builds upon, broadens and deepens this vision.

<sup>24</sup> For example: European Council of *Religious Leaders*, **Moscow Declaration on Advancing Human Dignity** (June 2011) (“The dignity of the human person is at the core of all our religious traditions. Every individual human being is bestowed with such dignity which should be respected regardless of the person’s religious or moral status.”); *Religions for Peace* Middle East–North Africa Council of Religious Leaders, **Marrakesh Declaration** (November 2011) (“We pledge ourselves to work together to promote and protect the fundamental dignity of all, including their related rights and duties. We are committed to advancing respect for religious differences and the protection of freedom of religion across our region.”); *Religions for Peace*, **Restoring Dignity: A Commitment to End Violence Against Women** (2011) (“Religions recognize the fundamental dignity of every woman and man.... This dignity is inviolable. It is not given by cultures, states, societies, communities or individuals. It cannot be taken away by them. But the recognition of this dignity must be ‘restored’ whenever it is violated. It must be actively respected, honored and protected.”).



The thrust of these previous Assembly reflections are twofold: 1) threats to any person's dignity, including his or her relatedness to others and the natural world is a threat to common well-being; and 2) "shared well-being" is the holistic state that truly honors and supports the flourishing of human dignity. Shared well-being – like human dignity – may be discerned to be a positive element of a shared vision of Peace.

"*Welcoming the Other*" is advanced whenever we work together to overcome threats to shared well-being. These threats include: exaggerated individualism (manifest as selfishness, greed and other vices); the misuse of religion to set diverse believers against one another; intolerance and violence against the "other;" governmental failures to honor human dignity and the rights that flow from it; exploitative or unjust economic systems; excessive armaments and the use of war and terror as a political tools instead of investing in mediation and reconciliation; and the failure to honor nature and develop in harmony with it.

"*Welcoming the Other*" is also advanced whenever we work together to promote spiritual and moral virtues – rooted in each tradition in their own ways – essential to building up shared well-being. These are virtues such as honesty, tolerance, care for others, respect for nature, the willingness to stand in solidarity with, and even sacrifice for, the well-being of all, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

In addition, "*Welcoming the Other*" by advancing shared well-being necessarily includes efforts to build just political and legal regimes that honor the rights of all, fair and ecologically balanced development schemes, common healing, common living, and common security.

We "*Welcome the Other*" when we work together to resist threats to shared well-being and when we stand in solidarity with the human dignity of all. We can do this by welcoming each person into the co-building, co-nurturing and co-stewarding of our shared well-being, which includes respect for nature and developing in harmony with it. This Assembly invites us to discern together how we can better advance shared well-being as a way of "*Welcoming the Other*."

## **WELCOMING THE OTHER BY ADVANCING CITIZENSHIP**

Our religious communities can "*Welcome the Other*" through multi-religious action for human dignity and shared well-being. These urgent global needs converge in many parts of the world as a third area for multi-religious action, the need for a more robust notion of citizenship.

Traditional understandings of citizenship focus on the legal right to belong to a particular country and the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen. Our Assembly theme calls us to advance the multi-religious grounds for advancing citizenship for all, rooted in legal regimes that protect human dignity. All people have basic rights and freedoms and deserve protection. Religious communities should actively help to ensure that governments fulfill their principle mandate of honoring and protecting the fundamental dignity, safety and well-being of all of their citizens, including their related religious and other rights. *Religions for Peace* promotes a vision in which all citizens hold certain basic rights regardless of their status as a member of a majority or minority group. These basic rights include the full rights of citizenship.





A contemporary notion of citizenship must also go beyond legal definitions of citizenship to ensure human dignity while allowing everyone to live peacefully in community. Social harmony is the result of the civility and stability of both society and the state.

“ A society is ‘cohesive’ if it works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility.

— OECD, *Perspectives on Global Development 2012*

States must establish policies and institutions that promote the integration, not mere assimilation, of the “other” into the majority culture. In society, minorities and their unique cultural and religious characteristics should be tolerated in the deep sense of “tolerance” outlined above. “*Welcoming the Other*” suggests that they should also be celebrated.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

If our widely shared understanding of Peace includes “*Welcoming the Other*,” every faith community and every person of faith is called, both individually and collectively, to resist threats to Peace that take the form of intolerance or violence, and to take positive action to “*Welcome the Other*.” These dual responsibilities constitute a vital component of the emergent *RfP* multi-religious vision of Peace.

“*Welcoming the Other*” in society, in every faith tradition, and through multi-religious action, means:

### FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

- › Working to advance shared values and virtuous behaviors essential to “*Welcoming the Other*,”
- › Working to eliminate all forms of intolerance by states, by non-state actors, by civil society, by religious groups and leaders, and by individuals;
- › Speaking out on behalf of vulnerable individuals and groups;
- › Standing in solidarity with the human dignity of all persons by working to advance their genuine flourishing as co-builders of shared well-being; and
- › Leveraging the power of multi-religious networks to “*Welcome the Other*” by advancing human dignity, shared well-being and citizenship through concrete multi-religious action.

### FOR STATES

- › Governance that is just and impartial;
- › Governance that ensures and protects the full enjoyment by all of universal human rights;
- › Remedies for victims of intolerance;
- › Social policies that recognize the dignity of displaced persons; and
- › Supporting and partnering with people of faith, religious communities and religious leaders in their efforts to “*Welcome the Other*.”



## FOR ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL

- › Calling attention to all forms of intolerance by states, by non-state actors, by civil society, by religious groups and leaders, and by individuals;
- › Advancing tolerance for the “other;” and
- › Advancing solidarity in action for the “other.”

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## COMMISSION 1

Welcoming the Other through

# Conflict Prevention and Transformation







## *“Welcoming the Other” means coming as equals to address a common problem*

### **INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>**

Major faith traditions around the world assert both the potential negative consequences, individually and collectively, of untransformed conflict and the potential positive consequences of utilizing conflict-ridden experience to grow in faith and tolerance. Does the conflict stimulate dialogue, discovery, generate just solutions to problems, stronger relationships and better communication? Or does it lead to separation, hostility, civil strife, terrorism, and war? The important question is how to handle conflict in ways that are more likely to produce constructive, rather than destructive, outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

How can faith communities “Welcome the Other” as partners in reconciliation? Such a common mission necessitates recognition of, and respect for, religious diversity, as well as formation, mobilization and equipping of multi-faith networks that can serve as effective agents of coexistence and cooperation.

The purpose of this paper is to design a roadmap for effective conflict prevention and transformation that can be applied by religious communities acting as effective interveners. It proposes a model that can be used by religious actors from any faith tradition, in particular one that can be implemented collaboratively, uniting and expanding the conflict transformation assets contributed by each religious group.

This paper addresses the characteristics of modern conflict, religious identity and religious values as drivers of conflict and provides a conflict transformation framework for faith-based actors.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is an excerpt of a much longer piece.

<sup>2</sup> Steele, *Overview of Basic Conflict Resolution*, 2008.



## I. CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN CONFLICT

The following is a brief description of the components of conflict, an overview of contemporary actors, the nature of contemporary war/violence and emerging paradigms regarding security.

### COMPONENTS OF CONFLICT

- › *Relationships*: Building healthy relationships between individuals, groups and societies is critical for successful conflict prevention and transformation. Dealing effectively with emotions, attitudes and behavior patterns can build ties across the divides.
- › *Disputes*: Finding mutually acceptable solutions to specific disputes is critical.
- › *Structures*: Structures can serve to heighten or resolve conflict, depending on how they are constituted and managed. It is important to facilitate reform in social systems to maintain stable peace.

### ACTORS IN CONFLICT<sup>3</sup>

- › *State power*: Although still a major factor to a great extent, national governments have lost the nearly exclusive control they used to exert over the flow of money, ideas, technology, goods, people, and even legal jurisdiction.
- › *Pan-governmental*: Some aspects of state sovereignty have been relinquished to pan-governmental organizations which, with international norms and laws, can constrain and judge individual citizens and determine what states can do within their own territory.
- › *Sub-state and non-state*: In many cases, power has shifted to a wide variety of non-state actors. These include: government sub-contractors, private security forces (security guards, warlords, or terrorist cells that often thrive in failed or failing states), social media, financial and trade institutions (private philanthropy and big business), and NGOs (including faith-based and the ones working on conflict transformation).

Violence in the modern world takes many forms. Although state-sponsored violence and organized crime remain important, contemporary violence is increasingly manifest in insurgency and terrorism. Religion tends to play an exacerbating role in each.

The new types of violence and war have generated dialogue regarding security sector reforms, including an expansion in the scope of security needs, a new security paradigm that emphasizes people, not states and a new commitment to shared security and the need for “global connectivity”.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Steele, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> A term proposed by Canadian diplomat Rob McRae in 2001.





## II. DRIVERS OF CONFLICT: IDENTITY AND VALUES

Specialists in conflict analysis have frequently been divided between those who view conflicts as caused by *substantive drivers* such as territory, resources, economy, or politics and those who emphasize *identity drivers*, group memberships such as ethnicity, tribe, race, or religion. Yet all conflicts involve interplay between both kinds of drivers.

The priorities given to specific identity groups tend to form the major boundary markers that distinguish in-groups and out-groups, “us” vs. “them.” Such designations enable groups to differentiate themselves from others, or to be distinguished by others.

Many social scientists, however, insist that an “us/them” distinction could too play an important role in healthy identity formation. They point to the necessity of a “bonding process” with one’s own group, especially for minority or low status peoples. If this is the case, then how does one avoid the tendency for this inclusion/exclusion process to degenerate into attack on all who belong to a “demonized” identity?

Faith communities are well placed to reframe identity formation when it has become destructive.

How can an intervener help begin the process of moving away from a fixed, entrenched single identity without denying the importance of bonding with one’s own group? Here are three possibilities to consider. In each case, it could be suggested that people initially consider reframing only for a particular moment or interaction:

### CHOOSE TO EMPHASIZE A DIFFERENT IDENTITY

- › A secondary one (e.g. professional identity – bring together medical people, educators, engineers, farmers, etc. from different ethnicities, religions, nations, or other groups).
- › One not previously considered (e.g. grandmothers from adversarial groups sharing about their families; youth from rival groups playing football or another sport).

### REDEFINE THEIR PRIMARY IDENTITY IN MORE FLEXIBLE (& ACCURATE?) TERMS

- › Define one’s self as part of a larger unit (e.g., as a member of an Abrahamic religion, instead of just one of those traditions – emphasizing what they have in common).
- › Shift the goals associated with the identity. (What does it mean to be Israeli? Are Biblically-based borders required? Or can it be negotiated? Must one be a religious Jew? Or can one be a secular Jew, non-Jew, or from another religious tradition?)

### AFFIRM IDENTITY OF “THE OTHER” AND ALLOW IT TO INFLUENCE HOW ONE SEES ONESELF

- › Tie groups together (e.g., marriage between people from different tribes, ethnicities, races, religions, social classes, etc. has often built bonds between antagonistic groups).



- › Provide ritual space between identities (e.g., shared artistic, musical or theatrical expression, and engagement in common religious or tribal rituals of healing can often break barriers, change stereotypes, and help move from in-group bonding to bridging).

## HUMAN FALLIBILITY AND TRANSFORMATION

One point of commonality among religious traditions is agreement regarding human fallibility. Every tradition has an analysis of “what is wrong with humanity” – what causes tragedy, suffering and failure. This is expressed in terms like ignorance, refusal to submit to God, and committing sin. All of these concepts are fundamental to religious explanations for human susceptibility to destructive conflict. These negative assessments of the human condition are, in turn, directly linked to each religion’s prescribed remedy for transformation, be it insight, revelation, salvation, or redemption.

Yet, religious communities also struggle with their own complicity in human fallibility as well as their desire to be agents of reconciling change. There is a tension within all faith traditions between the call to “truth” (to affirm the importance of one’s own spiritual tradition) and the call to “love” (to embrace the “other”). One fundamental challenge in “*Welcoming the Other*,” then, is to find a creative way for each religious tradition to affirm its role as both the custodian of their tradition and a channel of compassion for those who appear to embrace at least some cherished, but incompatible, values.

The way in which religious traditions approach this task will determine whether or not they contribute to religion as a driver/exacerbator, or a mitigator/resolver, of conflict.<sup>5</sup> Any assessment by religious leaders of the characteristics of conflict must evaluate situations when religion serves as an influential identity marker. Religion as a driver of conflict takes many forms. Religious communities need to recognize this and know how best to respond.

- › *Ethno-religious*: When religion and ethnicity are united as one identity marker;
- › *Religio-racial*: When purity of faith is equated with racial supremacy and dominance;
- › *Religious nationalism*: When religion is seen as central to the nation’s identity;
- › *Religious globalization*: When pan-national religious identity is paramount;
- › *Religious liberation*: When religion is tied to class struggle and violence is justified as a means to achieve freedom from oppression.


## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTREMIST ELEMENTS AND THEIR WIDER FAITH TRADITIONS<sup>6</sup>

“*Welcoming the Other*” as partners in conflict prevention and transformation can only be done successfully when religious communities are fully aware of the darker side that some elements within all faith traditions do play. Sometimes these elements only represent small fragments (such as independent, though lethal, terrorist cells) that operate without any political or social base and are vehemently disowned by the major religious tradition which they purport to represent.

5 Ayindo, Isolio and Steele, 2010.

6 Steele, 2013, Steele, Cha. 33 in Petersen and Simion, 2010, and Appleby, 2000.





However, sustainable movements of any kind usually require a broader base. Often extremist religious groups find this base within the wider faith tradition of which they are a part, increasing their destructive reach and capability. Since religious extremists often do gain significant influence by embedding themselves within a wider, like-minded faith community, it is important to ask: When does this tend to happen and why? What makes committed believers elevate what they share with extremists above what they have previously questioned or even strongly opposed?

When fear levels grow within the wider community during mass violence, it is easy for even the nominally religious to fear a loss of their identity and value system. At such a point of vulnerability, extremists may appear to be the only ones with a credible answer and the ability to speak a language the community understands. Often, the result is at least some attachment to (or acceptance of) an extremist presence.

Three types of linkages are utilized by extremists in order to embed themselves within their wider faith community: Ideological, Relational and Functional. How do they operate and what can religious interveners do?

**Ideological Linkage:** Based on the role of religion as an underlying world view, it is important to determine what the characteristics of extremist religious ideology are and how are they are linked to the identity, values, and beliefs of the wider faith community. These characteristics include:

- › *Aversion to secularization;*
- › *Belief in absolute truth embodied in one's own tradition;*
- › *Purification of one's own tradition;*
- › *Ingrained sense of suffering and victimization, combined with belief in ultimate victory/redemption;<sup>7</sup>*
- › *Identity as a chosen people with a divine mission;*
- › *Dualistic perspective – a “Good vs. Evil” Crusade.<sup>8</sup>*

**Relational Linkage:** How are contacts made that enable extremists to promulgate their perceptions of the situation and their vision/mission within the wider faith tradition and even the wider society in general?

- › *Use of religious mythology to legitimize the call for in-group loyalty;*
- › *Use of religious and tribal leaders to persuade, mandate and legitimize an extremist agenda;*
- › *Connection with people's sense of victimization and grievance.*

**Functional linkage:** This involves addressing and fulfilling any of the basic needs of the population. Who is it that is providing basic services, such as: shelter, health, food, education, employment, security, access to communication, transportation, etc.?

- › *Gap in basic services left by failure of governments and moderate civil society to provide;*
- › *Gap often filled by extremist religious sects.*

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<sup>7</sup> Gopin, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Appleby, 2000 and Aslan, 2010.



## DEALING WITH THE LINKAGES: HOW RELIGIOUS INTERVENERS MIGHT RESPOND<sup>9</sup>

It is critically important for any faith-based efforts at conflict prevention and transformation, by one community or multi-faith efforts, to examine this relationship and ask how best to deal with these linkages. What can be done to assist vulnerable religious communities in conflict zones to become agents of conflict prevention, if extremism is not yet embedded, or to become agents of conflict transformation if extremism has already infiltrated the social and religious fabric?

In the first case, the task is to prevent the consummation of the linkage. In the second case, it is to replace the linkage with beneficial relationships that foster the best indigenous values and provide the services essential to well-being. This linkage transformation must, then, find ways to bridge the ideological divide, practice reconciliation and address basic needs of the community.

## GUIDELINES FOR BRIDGE BUILDING THE IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE<sup>10</sup>

Whether dealing with extremist groups or the wider community in which they are (or intend to be) embedded, faith-based interveners (even indigenous ones) need to examine their own fundamental mentalities and behavior patterns.

The key is to realize one is engaged in conflicts of worldviews and learn how to handle conflicts of values. The following guidelines, for bridge building with extremists or communities that embed them, also provide useful principles for dealing with any relationship involving differences in values, including partnerships among multi-faith actors desiring to collaborate.


- › *Understand their perspective as they see it*; not as an outsider who views them as “using” or “distorting” religion.” The issue is not agreement, but accurate perception of perspectives, assumptions, motivations, rationalizations and conclusions which are part of the worldview of those with whom we are dealing. It will be important to remember that, even among those who may be categorized as extremist, there is likely to be a spectrum of perspectives. When we include the broader communities in which extremists embed themselves, this will be the case even more of the time. In other words, the whole spectrum of diversity is important to understand and great care should be taken before making judgments.
- › *Correctly understand the limitations of one’s own perspective*: Conflict interveners need to realize that they are not above the ideological fray. Pretending one does not bring one’s own ultimate values is a delusion, whether one is religious or secular. For many religious interveners, the challenge may be that one comes with a recognized different belief system, but must know how to remain true to one’s own worldview without imposing it on the other. No intervener can be effective when coming with an attitude of superiority. “*Welcoming the Other*” means coming as equals to address a common problem. As committed multi-faith conflict transformers, we must enter any encounter, with extremists or their co-religionists, asking how to dialogue constructively over fundamental issues arising out of differing worldviews.

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9 Steele, 2013.

10 Ibid.



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- › *The potential added value of a faith perspective:* Often forgotten, in this debate, is the fact that religious understandings of truth are primarily experiential and relational, not rational or ideological. Most religious traditions affirm that truth is fundamentally understood to be found in relationship; only secondarily is it framed in abstract conception (what we call theology or doctrine). This puts the emphasis on values of faithfulness, reliability, and fidelity, rather than on accuracy of knowledge. Furthermore, each religious tradition does include an understanding of relational truth that is rooted beyond an exclusive human community. Can this oneness with the divine, or with humanity, help to inform a given community's perspective on truth and enmity, even in the context of violent conflict?
  - › *Building solidarity on the "other's" terms:* Utilizing wisdom from their own traditions to affirm common values, when possible, or to raise questions and pose alternative viewpoints. The challenge is to use their own frame of reference to stimulate creative exploration regarding faith-based peacebuilding. How do they understand justice? Hospitality? Apology? Reconciliation? What do they believe their faith requires them to do as a religious community? What religious assets does their faith provide for peacebuilding? Within all religious traditions, there are elements of the tradition that can be used to stretch believer's perceptions. If done with sensitivity, it is possible to help believers of all kinds to assess the degree to which their current attitudes or behavior is consistent with their espoused values.

If religious interveners can bridge the ideological divide by facilitating understanding of another's perspective, holding one's own in check, reaffirming a faith-based focus on "relational truth," building solidarity using the wisdom of "others" traditions, and stimulating evaluation of the congruence between values and behavior, then one has begun to handle a values conflict effectively. One will, then, be better able to assist parties in conflict to re-perceive the situation, re-conceptualize possibilities, re-align primary commitments, reframe identity, and begin the process of reconciliation.

### III. A CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS ACTORS

Conflict transformation is a means of reconciling people and relationships, who then work together non-violently to resolve problems and disputes, and facilitate systemic changes in unjust and violence-inducing social structures.<sup>11</sup>

There are numerous peacebuilding roles which have been identified and used by a variety of conflict interveners, including faith-based actors. Identifying the typical stages and enumerating the variety of roles are important starting points in the effort to assess which exactly is the best approach to conflict transformation in a given context. However, we must still recognize that the stages through which particular conflicts progress will be influenced by the specific type of conflict, the exact security needs,

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<sup>11</sup> Adaptation of Lederach, John Paul, 1997.



the actors involved, the identity formation process, and the role played by all the conflict drivers. Similarly, each peacebuilding role must be assessed in terms of the relevant function it can play (depending on the goal deemed appropriate) in a given stage of the conflict, which components of the conflict it can best address, and what adaptations need to be considered due to geographic location and specific culture and values of a given society or faith tradition.

Designing a clear roadmap for effective conflict transformation that can be applicable around the world requires an easily understood framework that still recognizes all this complexity. The conflict transformation assessment strategy will address the question of determining the appropriate expression of a given peacebuilding role within a particular stage of conflict.

### TYPICAL STAGES IN THE LIFE-CYCLE OF A CONFLICT

No two conflicts progress in the same way, yet there are identifiable stages through which most social conflicts progress.<sup>12</sup> Describing these stages helps to identify appropriate conflict transformation roles and related strategies to fulfill these roles.

The first stage in the life-cycle of conflict is *latent conflict*, or *stable and unstable peace*<sup>13</sup> where injustices and gross imbalances of power are present but have not yet surfaced. The second stage is confrontation or *unstable peace*. If confrontations are not stopped immediately they tend to escalate and become intractable. Confrontation may be followed by *escalation* or *crisis/war*, which can become very destructive. Escalation, however, cannot continue indefinitely. De-escalation can be temporary or can be part of a broader trend toward settlement or resolution. Or escalation may lead to a stalemate, a situation in which neither side can win. But which often presents an ideal opportunity for negotiation and a potential settlement.<sup>14</sup> The final stage is the post-conflict stage or *unstable and stable peace*, when violence has ceased.

### THE BROAD SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING ROLES

In the interest of designing an easily understood framework for conflict transformation, we will examine six fairly broad categories of peacebuilding roles: (1) observation and witness, (2) education and formation, (3) advocacy and empowerment, (4) facilitated dialogue and reconciliation, (5) arbitration, mediation and facilitated problem solving, and (6) social construction and maintenance.<sup>15</sup>

1. **Observation and witness** entail being a vigilant presence in a conflict situation, one that is designed to prevent, report violence and other forms of injustice, to reduce the likelihood of violence, and transform unjust situations. Far from being a passive role, the observer is frequently called upon to be physically present, at least temporarily, amidst people who face possible or actual

<sup>12</sup> This brief analysis is drawn from the Preparatory Document for the Conflict Transformation Commission of the Seventh World Assembly of Religions for Peace (1999) drafted by Cynthia Sampson.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Lund depicts the life cycle of ethno-religious conflict using a similar bell-shaped curve in which the intensity of a conflict (the vertical axis) is traced in relation to its duration (the horizontal axis). He proposes that the cycle starts with durable peace, goes up to stable peace, then unstable peace, crisis and war at the top of the curve. The cycle then continues down the curve in reverse order – crisis, unstable peace, stable peace and durable peace.

<sup>14</sup> Kriesberg, Louis. 2003. "Escalation and Institutionalization Stages."

<sup>15</sup> Ayindo, Isolio and Steele, 2010; Steele, 2008, "Reconciliation Strategies in Iraq;" Steele, 2008 "An Introductory Overview to Faith-Based Peacebuilding;" and Steele, 2013.





danger. Observer activities can include: conflict assessment efforts, fact-finding missions, early warning mechanisms, accompaniment of people in danger, monitoring of conflict/cease-fires, human rights abuses, and election processes, being a supporting presence during formal negotiations, silent meditation, standing with people in grief, artistic expressions that bridge cultural/religious divides and rituals of healing.

2. **Education and formation** involve laying the foundation for transforming an unjust and violent conflict into a just peace. It requires internalizing the peace-related values and inculcation of ethical behavior inherent within one's spiritual tradition. This requires knowledge of the specific tradition as well as a methodology that emerges from the faith experience of the believers and applies to all peoples in the conflict context. In order to adequately prepare a society for peacebuilding, faith-based actors can provide educational activities that will:

- › *Raise the conscience* of the population regarding inequities or perceptions of parties to the conflict;
- › *Develop the skills* necessary to perform other conflict intervention roles and train people in peace-building efforts (such as mediation, conciliation, facilitated dialogue, advocacy, nonviolent action, etc.);
- › *Nourish the growth of spiritual values* that can provide moral direction for the society;
- › *Increase awareness and understanding* of other faith traditions;
- › *Promote healing* through proclamations, rituals of worship, prayer, confession, forgiveness, and other faith practices.

3. **Advocacy and empowerment** involve a commitment to promote, support or defend the cause of a just peace in the eyes of the wider community and/or one or more of the parties in conflict. But in many religious traditions, the advocate is also called to empower these groups to achieve a just peace.

- › *Party advocacy* exists when one takes the side of a particular party to the conflict. Frequently this is done on behalf of the perceived weaker party in order to create a more equitable balance of power.
- › *Outcome advocacy* exists when one selects a particular outcome to the conflict as the most desirable and attempts to create an environment in which this solution will be adopted. This form of advocacy is often used to pursue justice, but can also be used to promote the reduction of violence. One can support a disarmament campaign as well as human rights.
- › *Process advocacy* exists when one presses for acceptance of a particular procedure for resolving a conflict. One could advocate mediation or arbitration; one could focus on the particular crisis or try to address the underlying structural inequities within the society.

The methodology used by any actors for each type of advocacy can include a variety of confrontational activities such as protests, petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, and other acts of civil disobedience, as well as less confrontational methods like public statements, speeches/ preaching, letters, lobbying, fasting, and engaging in personal conversation. Also many religious groups issue statements. And some of these activities are the outcome when faith-based actors, performing other roles, engage in activities like prayer meetings or faith-based educational events.



Within many religious traditions, there is also:


- › *Nonviolent advocacy* that includes
  - › *Non-resistance* – where justice is requested, but not demanded;
  - › *Non-coercive resistance* – where justice is demanded, but moral persuasion rather than coercion is the approved means (central to notable faith-based conflict transformers such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and others);
  - › *Coercive resistance* – which involves a limited show of non-violent force (e.g., support for sanctions, indictments by courts/tribunals, or calling for nonviolent police protection). Such activities are used and justified by some faith-based actors, especially when power is concentrated on one side of the conflict in order to balance the power relationship before a just solution can be achieved.

4. **Facilitated dialogue and reconciliation** are intermediary roles focused on relationship building. Reconciliation involves bringing together people or groups of people who have been alienated from one another due to distrust, animosity, and sometimes hostility and aggression. The goal is to build trust and confidence which will help parties in conflict to overcome barriers and experience healing. It involves providing a channel of communication, one that sometimes has to begin by carrying messages between parties that are either unwilling or unable to meet. When possible, however, it is advantageous to create some kind of dialogue process. Building effective dialogue requires facilitating a “learning conversation,” the kind of story-telling in which each party has something to offer and each party has something to learn. It requires active and empathetic listening, handling emotions constructively, clarifying and correcting perceptions in order to facilitate the sharing of narratives.

The journey of reconciliation requires an encounter with oneself as well as with the “other.” It begins by dealing with all the grievances of the past, but then must shift the participants’ focus to creating a better future. In a context where there has been excessive violence, the facilitator must start by empathizing with the suffering of all parties, then assist hurt and victimized people to acknowledge their own prejudices, stereotypes and misperceptions, and help all parties to overcome a revenge mentality. Such a reconciliation process involves a number of steps.

5. **Arbitration, mediation and facilitated problem solving** are intermediary roles focused on dispute resolution and, sometimes, structural change. These roles are listed in order of the degree of influence the third party has over the outcome.
  - › *Arbitration* gives the third party complete control over the outcome. The arbitrator is very involved with the parties, going through many of the steps a mediator will take, but commitment to a final decision is in the hands of the arbitrator.
  - › *Mediation* places the third party in charge of a process designed to help the conflicted parties come to a decision. Effective mediation will assist the parties to come to a decision themselves. Successful mediation usually begins with some form of relationship building, with the mediator ensuring a safe environment and encouraging the sharing of narratives.



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- › *Facilitated problem solving*<sup>16</sup> is a role in which the third party leads a brainstorming process which is designed to generate a number of good options for the parties in conflict to consider, but stops short of any decision to commit. It is often private, confidential, off-the-record, and non-binding, therefore increasing the likelihood of creativity and risk-taking. The participants in the process are often not the official representatives of the conflicted parties, but are usually well respected people of influence.

6. **Social construction and maintenance** involves focusing on structural social and political conditions throughout all the stages of conflict.<sup>17</sup> Meeting such needs necessitates interaction with a broad spectrum of social institutions, including those responsible for *security, social and economic well-being, and governance and civic participation*.

Faith-based actors are in a primary position to fulfill all these roles. The mandates of most religious communities include a call to serve those most vulnerable. In the developing world, they already constitute the first line of response, have the most established and locally-led social infrastructure, are present throughout societies, and are committed long-term. For these reasons, they have unparalleled capacity to function as comprehensive and adaptable service providers, especially if they are part of a network of multi-faith and secular partners. Therefore, it is critically important to empower faith-based working groups to work with community mobilization efforts or existing community based organizations. The groups could be formed around specific concerns, or within specific localities, or to include specific identity groups. Examples of faith-based groups involved in such activity are numerous – refugee/IDP return, emergency aid distribution, business corruption, role of religion in schools, election monitoring, unbiased media, disarmament/demobilization/reintegration, community policing, early warning/early response mechanisms, rebuilding/repairing places of worship, prison reform – the list of possibilities is as infinite as people's imaginations.

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16 Faith-based actors are more likely to function in the problem solving role when dealing with high-level national and international disputes. In these cases, the religious groups or individuals function in what is called "track 2" diplomacy which parallels and supports the official "track 1" negotiations. Ecumenical and inter-religious roundtables that produce joint statements can potentially function in this capacity, depending on the quality of their relationships with "track 1" decision makers, as well as the quality of their recommendations and their strategy to promote their acceptance. Occasionally this problem solving process gains enough prominence that it contributes directly to official diplomacy and is then referred to as "track 1 ½." Very occasionally, faith-based actors have actually functioned as the official mediators in hi-level, "track 1" negotiation. It is much more common, however, for faith-based actors to mediate more local conflicts, including ethnic, tribal, religious, organizational, family, etc. In some cultures, especially those in which religious leaders carry great authority, this mediation role, as well as arbitration, are very common.

17 Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2002. For more extensive treatment of this role, see the web link available in the listing of sources, rather than appendices to this paper.



## IV. A ROADMAP FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The task now is to construct a framework that can assist religious communities and their leaders from any faith tradition, anywhere in the world, to evaluate the complexity of all the considerations presented thus far and gain insight into the best approach to conflict transformation in a particular setting. To accomplish this, we will introduce a table comparing the two major factors – peacebuilding roles and stages of conflict (*see pages 38–39*).

In each box within the table, examples of concrete suggestions are presented regarding which particular functions of a given role (vertical axis) might best fit a particular stage (horizontal axis). Note that some formulation of every role can be useful at any stage. For example, reconciliation efforts can be effective throughout the life cycle of a conflict, though assessment of the best approach must consider the current life experience of participants. In the context of war or post-violence, the levels of trauma and grievance will likely affect both aims and process. Even some functions of one role are mentioned in more than one box, indicating that even specific tasks within roles might be adapted to be used in more than one stage.

Many tasks listed in the table are only suggested and do not represent an exhaustive list.

## V. MOBILIZING MULTIPLE RELIGIOUS ASSETS

The last part of this section suggests a process by which faith-based actor(s) might assess their own resources in order to effectively perform their roles or functions at a given stage of a particular conflict. We will look in general at the types of specific assets religious actors bring to the task of peacebuilding, examine the assets brought and the role that the *RfP* network can play in mobilizing and equipping the membership of its affiliates for conflict prevention and transformation. Throughout, we must address this through the collaborative lens of “*Welcoming the Other*.”

### RELIGIOUS ASSETS

Religious actors can function as effective peacebuilders in a variety of roles due to important spiritual, moral, and social assets many hold in common. Through their spiritual perspective, faith communities provide many with a sense of meaning and belonging, a vision for society that includes the well-being of all, norms and practices that promise and promote healing and restoration, and the motivation and encouragement that can come with a sense of calling. Religious leaders, in particular, can use these assets to provide and interpret a faith-based value system that can undergird attitudinal and behavioral transformation. The moral assets of religious communities flow from this spiritual grounding. The faith-based value system provides the believers with a moral code which members of the faith community can apply to their own lives, articulate publically and, thereby, encourage moral responsibility on the part of others – from public authorities to those who have violated the well-being of others.






## PEACEBUILDING ROLES AND STAGES OF CONFLICT

Roles	Stable & Unstable Peace / Latent Conflict	Crisis & War / Conflict Escalation	Unstable & Stable Peace / Dispute Settlement or Post-conflict Peacebuilding
Observation & Witness	Creating early warning mechanisms; accompanying people in danger and protecting property; monitoring elections; conflict assessment to help prevent future violence; leading peace prayers & other religious rituals.	Creating early warning mechanisms; reporting violence; accompanying people in danger; participating in rituals of grief and healing; providing trauma counseling and a supportive presence during negotiations; monitoring elections; leading peace prayers & other religious rituals.	Monitoring ceasefires; Fact-finding missions to collect information about previous incidents of violence; conflict assessment to help prevent reoccurrence of violence.
Education & Formation	Provide joint cultural activities; create established training programs that help develop other peacebuilding skills, especially faith-based conflict prevention; raise consciousness of people regarding injustices in society; develop education programs that encourage religious communities to examine values from a faith-based perspective; find ways to get information & perspectives shared.	Lead short training sessions that assist people to develop other peacebuilding skills, especially faith-based conflict transformation; find ways to get information & perspectives shared when there is not easy access to the other side; preaching at critical moments in negotiations or amidst tensions; education of population about consequences of war.	Create /distribute documents that assist in post-war rebuilding; educate about peace agreements and provide information that informs people about issues at stake in public referenda; provide joint cultural activities; create training programs that help develop the skills to perform other roles, especially faith-based conflict transformation.
Advocacy & Empowerment	Participate in petitions, protests, demonstrations, boycotts, to advocate for social and political change; advocate for constructive intervention by outside actors; formulate peace declarations & gain acceptance by all stakeholders.	Advocate for, and empower, leaders from the parties in conflict to begin negotiations; advocate for constructive intervention by outside actors; participate in fasting by faith-based-group to call attention to victimized people; formulate peace declarations & gain acceptance by all stakeholders; advocate for specific issues of transparency and justice, e.g., release of child soldiers; engage in media advocacy.	Advocate for either retributive justice (arrest of war criminals) or restorative justice – (establishment of truth and reconciliation commission); empower a working group, commission, task force, etc. to implement programs that address specific social justice issue; formulate peace declarations & gain acceptance by all stakeholders; advocate for constructive intervention by outside actors.



<b>Roles</b>	<b>Stable &amp; Unstable Peace / Latent Conflict</b>	<b>Crisis &amp; War / Conflict Escalation</b>	<b>Unstable &amp; Stable Peace / Dispute Settlement or Post-conflict Peacebuilding</b>
<b>Facilitated Dialogue &amp; Reconciliation</b>	Encourage/lead sessions of dialogue so that people from different religions will be informed of one another and others' faith; assist factions within one party to discuss their difference in a way that promotes understanding and eases tensions; carry messages between two parties in conflict.	Establish dialogue processes that help people share their stories of suffering to create better understanding and acknowledgment of others' experience; assist factions within one party to discuss differences in a way that promotes understanding and eases tensions; carry messages between two parties in conflict.	Establishing local dialogue processes that help people share their stories of suffering in order to assist in healing and promote bonds between people from conflicted groups; create memorials and lead rituals that enable healing of the past and encourage future cooperation; help establish, lead or participate in a truth and reconciliation commissions at national, regional, or local levels.
<b>Arbitration, Mediation &amp; Facilitated Problem Solving</b>	Mediate or arbitrate local conflicts that have not yet become violent; participate in problem solving sessions to address issues of injustice, unmet needs, non-violent disputes; facilitate roundtables at local, regional and national levels.	Set up, or participate in, "track 2" diplomacy process with brainstorming; share possible options to end the conflict, or at least deal effectively with some parts of it; mediate or arbitrate local disputes that arise due to a tense environment and unresolved larger issues.	Mediate or arbitrate local conflicts that are no longer violent; participate in problem solving sessions to address issues of injustice, unmet needs, or simmering, non-violent disputes; facilitate roundtables at local, regional and national levels.
<b>Social Construction &amp; Maintenance</b>	Work on political reform to correct some injustices in society; form working groups, composed of persons from different identity groups, who agree to develop and implement action plans to address a specific social structure problem.	Assist in emergency relief efforts, such as providing basic services to refugees and IDPs; enhance protection for those who are most vulnerable; work on political reform to correct some of the injustices in society; form working groups, composed of persons from different identity groups, who agree to develop and implement action plans to address a specific social structure problem.	Assist in development projects that aid people in refugee and IDP camps to find more lasting, permanent solutions to meet their needs; work on political reform which will correct some of the injustices in society; form working groups, composed of persons from previously conflicted parties, who agree to develop and implement action plans to address a specific social structure problem; support neighborhood peace associations.





Religious leaders, especially, have the power and opportunity to share, instruct, and encourage the practice of this moral framework, drawn from their faith tradition, which delegitimizes violence, promotes non-violence and violence prevention, and provides resources with which whole communities can find and experience the right balance between accountability and acceptance.

Finally, it is the social assets of faith communities that provide the social infrastructure necessary to promote the spiritual vision and moral values within the larger society. Religious communities in most of the world are familiar and often trusted institutions that impact many lives and have the potential to provide space for social cohesion. They are at the center of communal life throughout all the stages of peace or conflict. The social assets, when combined with the other two, provide the leaders of faith communities with both the platform and the authority to be heard. Many of these leaders serve their communities for long periods of time. They are frequently closer to their people than many politicians and government personnel, giving them a wider and deeper reach into the hearts and lives of their communities. For this reason, they are in a unique position to listen and interpret, to encourage and challenge, to instruct and promote. Religious leaders have the vision, authority, and the tools to act as information processors who can dispel rumors, correct perception, and help their people to re-perceive the possibilities for peaceful coexistence.

While all of the assets listed above are, in some form, shared among the various faith communities, “*Welcoming the Other*” requires that we acknowledge that there are differences and look carefully and critically at the influence of the spiritual foundations and historical practices of each tradition. Understanding the lens used by other faiths is essential either when the other traditions are stakeholders in the conflict or partners in a peacebuilding intervention effort. Multi-faith collaboration requires such an inventory. Despite commonality of many overall values (e.g., charity, hospitality, or justice), it is often the distinctive perspectives, histories, and practices that inform and resonate with one’s own faith community and, at times, raise questions and even disagreements in the minds of others. Scott Thomas points out that appeals to moral values within religious traditions are not free-floating propositions. He contends that faith communities do not exert influence merely through generalized ethical frameworks that are proposed universally, but through the particular practices that demonstrate and give meaning to those frameworks. Instead of proposing “thin practices,” based on common, general values, he calls for “thick practices,” shaped by the particular meanings given to those values by specific faith communities and exemplified by its own framers and practitioners.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, along with an acknowledgment that faith communities are not immune from universal human fallibility, we must examine both assets and challenges of each tradition.

## **MECHANISMS FOR MOBILIZING AND EQUIPPING THE *RELIGIONS FOR PEACE* NETWORK**

While recognizing diversity and the challenges it brings, *RfP* operates with the firm belief that the efforts of individual religious communities are made vastly more effective through multi-religious co-operation. Religious communities working together can be powerful actors to prevent violence before it erupts, diffuse conflict when it occurs, and lead their communities to rebuild war-torn societies. This mission statement is rooted in the acceptance, by representatives from all the world’s major faith traditions, of a declaration of common values, as stated in the *Kyoto Declaration* made at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* in 2006:

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas, 2005.



“ We share a conviction of the fundamental unity of the human family, and the equality and dignity of all human beings. We affirm the sacredness of the individual person and the importance of his or her freedom of conscience. We are committed to the ethical values and attitudes commonly shared by our religious traditions. We uphold the value of life manifest in human community and in all creation. We acknowledge the importance of the environment to sustain life for the human family. We realize that human power is neither self-sufficient nor absolute, and that the spirit of love, compassion, selflessness, and the force of inner truthfulness ultimately have greater power than prejudice, hate, enmity or violence.

Though stated in general terms, with attention needed to the particularities of the various traditions, this statement can be used as a basis for developing multi-religious assets. Cooperation, based on shared values, even broadly defined ones, can motivate committed, diverse religious communities to align around common challenges to peace. Such a commitment offers a creative opportunity to take advantage of complimentary assets and face even daunting challenges. “*Welcoming the Other*” amidst diversity is potentially more powerful, both symbolically and substantively, than the efforts of individual religious groups acting alone.

*RfP* has an extensive network of global, regional, national and local affiliates with extensive reach into societies around the world, the capacity to equip and mobilize all these levels, and a history of significant success in building multi-religious platforms for conflict prevention and transformation. With its diversity of institutional forms, *RfP* can work discretely through local structures in tense situations or reach masses of people through its own network and its relationships with other actors. It can provide solidarity visits to local partners in zones of conflict and it can develop regional and global peacebuilding strategies. With this scope of capacity, the *RfP* network is well positioned to follow-up any initiatives begun at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly. Such follow-up will be a critical component in supporting the ongoing analysis and implementation necessary to foster sustainable change. Only long-term, well-developed and resourced efforts will have lasting impact.

In particular, *RfP* can add its multi-religious assets to the task of performing each of the six peacebuilding roles described in this paper and portrayed in the Conflict Transformation Grid. A few suggestions are offered here, not as an exhaustive list, but as a stimulus for further discussion and brainstorming.





## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The conflict transformation work of the *RfP* network is a collaborative work, a work that takes place where religious communities exist. It is a common labor that proceeds with respect for the ways that religious communities can organize themselves for common action on local, national, regional and international levels. Representatives of each religious community work together to take common action on common problems, but in ways that respect the different religious identities of one another. In cooperation, we surrender nothing of the deepest inner impulse of our beliefs and spiritualities, but we express our commitments in action together. Religious communities working together to transform conflict demonstrates the largely untapped power of multi-religious cooperation. The variety of concrete and practical methodologies presented here, and illustrated in the case studies, can serve to open the horizons of possibilities for this collaboration.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- › Which security needs do you see as most important within the society where you live and/or work?
- › What values are of central importance to conflicted groups in your society? What happens when fundamental values and identities are threatened?
- › How would you propose to help vulnerable groups in your society to reframe their identities, taking initial steps toward building bridges?
- › What potential is there for the various religious communities to affirm their own tradition and values, yet still “Welcome the Other?”
- › How well does your faith community welcome the “other” that comes from a community in which extremism is embedded?
- › What added value can multi-religious collaboration bring to the task of conflict prevention or transformation in societies affected by extremist religion?
- › What do you think is most necessary in order to “Welcome the Other” as a partner in conflict prevention and transformation?
- › What universal religious assets would you emphasize?
- › How would you approach utilizing the assets and confronting the challenges inherent with specific faith traditions? Is there any one tradition that would be most difficult for you?
- › What do you think are the most important next steps in mobilizing and equipping the Religions for Peace Network? Work on a certain level? Support for implementing certain roles? Building institutional capacity?
- › What are the attitudes, assumptions, perceptions and biases that prevent one from being a welcoming ideological bridge builder?



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## COMMISSION 2

Welcoming the Other through

# Just and Harmonious Societies







## *Good people serving the common good must have good policies*

### INTRODUCTION

In a hurting world full of global challenges, the opportunity to live out the values of one's faith has never been greater. This paper focuses on the opportunity before faith communities worldwide, presenting a strategic logic for how they might approach and apply their values, together, amidst the multiple challenges that all peoples of this planet share.

The key is citizenship. If it is understood as a means of both civility and stability – within and among all communities – then social harmony can result.

Three realities form and inform any practical understanding and strategic engagement to effect positive, sustainable solutions to today's complex global challenges. First is the acknowledgment that these challenges cannot be singularly addressed by a government, a nongovernmental organization, a business, or a faith group, or any entity acting alone. Second, every challenge will require a coordinated response of many partners, especially those who live in closest proximity to the challenge at hand.

Third, partnership structures are needed that institutionalize the relationship between governments and the grassroots. Good people serving the common good must have good policies that protect and promote two essentials: 1) the right of different groups, including religious communities, to contribute to public policy and practical action; and, 2) the responsibility to engage one another with civility across deep and even irreconcilable political and theological differences. Without the latter the former becomes impossible.

To enable and accelerate practical action, however, the process of partnership should demonstrate that people of great political and theological difference can work, *together*. The process of partnership provides the opportunity to model how we live with our deepest differences. Before any of us even get to a particular global challenge, we – as representatives of our faiths, our institutions, our governments – must demonstrate a philosophy or theology of the “other” – an ethic not of thin relativism but of robust principled pluralism that yields courteous candor and genuine mutual respect.

The fundamental questions of our times are these:

- › *Can we live with our deepest differences?*
- › *Can the best of faith defeat the worst of religion?*
- › *Can we acknowledge that, in a globalizing era, all of our faith groups are in the minority somewhere, and hence protection of minorities everywhere is a matter of basic justice, fairness, and reciprocity?*
- › *Can we treat each other honorably and fairly as fellow citizens, and do so because of our faiths/worldviews rather than in spite of them?*



## I. GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENSHIP

As we seek to discuss citizenship in the context of the world as it is, and as a practical concept that enables an engagement process that strengthens the civility of society, and the stability of the state, we must ask the following questions:

1. Is there a “safe space” within which to build the spiritual architecture necessary for an ongoing dialogue, whatever the issue/challenge of the hour may be, that leads to positive and practical action?
2. What is the narrative that potentially gives permission to all parties to participate in a new paradigm of positive change?
3. What is the product of such a space, architecture, and narrative?

### QUESTION ONE

*Is there a “safe space” to build the spiritual architecture necessary for an ongoing dialogue – per the issue/challenge – that leads to positive and practical action?*

Every social context needs a “safe space” to talk about mutual respect for each other, in order to talk about a common future. Such a setting should provide an environment where people who would not otherwise meet – representing a broad cross-section in terms of religion, gender, age, professional field, or other differences – do meet regularly, discussing how best to move forward.

Put simply, there must be talk before there can be trust. And with trust comes the possibility of civic consensus about the tangible actions needed to move toward a better future.

Two factors are key to the eventual success of the “safe space.” First, government and grassroots leaders must be present. One without the other is unsustainable. Sustainable change can only occur when policy and people are in intentional and transparent interaction.

Second, as people get to know one another across sectors, ethnicities, and religious traditions there emerges an opportunity for people to share what it is that motivates them. Often that motivation will be faith. And while faiths can have irreconcilable differences, they do share a belief in something greater than the human condition.

In other words, as the safety of the space deepens, participants recognize and welcome all theological points of departure, as long as each contributes to a spiritual/moral architecture that frames and enables service to the common good, acknowledges full equality of rights and responsibilities in public life for all, and builds social harmony.

Once safety is established, other possibilities result. People will seek good scholarship to inform their policies and practical action. That scholarship, in turn, will contribute to the need for a new standard of training and education, through which behavior might be changed. The only way to change behavior is to change a mindset. As the common spiritual architecture works on a change of heart, education and training will change behavior the only way behavior can be changed – by changing the mindset.





Over time, the end-result of such a process is a networked structure of energized and informed stakeholders who, despite different backgrounds, have a common understanding and appreciation for each other, and what needs to be done. Positive change is now possible, as well as sustainable.

## QUESTION TWO

*What is the narrative that potentially gives permission to all parties to participate in a new paradigm of positive change?*

Once there is a space with a spiritual architecture, a platform is necessary that anyone can access, especially those who have not given such issues any previous thought. That platform is the narrative of citizenship.

The word “citizenship” can be a sensitive term. In some polarized contexts, words like “co-existence” may be needed for a time, building readiness for later usage and embrace of the word “citizenship.” But the larger point is this: what is a common public narrative that allows all parties – including those who have been a significant part of previous challenges – to begin thinking differently, together.

Any discussion of citizenship is inherently a conversation about governance, of the link between policy and people, and the rights and responsibilities of all. The state is no better than the citizens who run it, and society is only as good as the laws and policies that enable it.

The definition of citizenship varies according to context, existing on at least four levels: spiritual, ethnic, state and global.

At the individual level, if there is a belief in something greater than oneself, there is a spiritual citizenship. Second, citizenship might refer to an ethnic or “national” identity, i.e., a people group (“nation”) with which one identifies.

Next, there is the state itself. It is vital to note that there is no such thing as a “nation-state,” i.e., one people group within one set of internationally recognized boundaries.

What actually exists worldwide are states that each contain many nations. Given the de-stabilizing potential of changing the borders of states, most boundaries will be in place for the foreseeable future. The results are states that need social harmony among the ethno- and/or religious groups who have specific spiritual and ethnic identities, but also carry the passport/citizenship of a particular state.

Finally, there is an increasing sense of global citizenship, especially on issues ranging from climate change to sex-trafficking to religious freedom to terrorism. These issues do not respect the previous arenas of citizenship; and, in order to effectively engage, require some sacrifice of sovereignty pursuant practical partnerships that transcend identities and borders.

The interrelationship between and among these “citizenships” is also tricky, but the choice can be reduced to some simple questions for the society’s people and the state’s policies.



For the individuals of society, the choice is whether to tolerate or celebrate those who do not look, act, or pray as they do. Tolerance is not good enough. Tolerance allows for the mere existence of the other, engaging the other on a quid-pro-quo transaction. Tolerance is brittle, and unsustainable. Celebration, on the other hand, encourages people to share the essence of their identity with others, as essential to the state's identity. Celebration sees active engagement with those dissimilar as a transformation opportunity to not only respect but be rooted in the other.

For the institutions of the state, the choice is to establish policies that assimilate or integrate those not of the majority culture. In this context, “assimilate” suggests that all minorities must act like the majority. On the other hand, “integrate” suggests that all minorities – because of who they are, not despite who they are – will be treated as equal citizens under the rule of law, with equal opportunity.

Thus, social harmony – that is, the civility and stability of society and the state – results when the *government* has policies that intentionally integrate, while at the same time the *grassroots* has people that consciously celebrate differences. The result is a public policy process where all are invited to bring the very essence of who they are – spiritual, ethnic, state, and global – to any and all conversations about governance.

### QUESTION THREE

*What is the product?*

If the “safe space” deepens and expands through a common exploration and resulting narrative of citizenship, what kinds of “products” can we expect in support of that citizenship? There are four results to keep in mind, most of which happen simultaneously, over time.

**First, the product is the process.** This result is imperative if the “safe space” for candid discourse and relationship-building did not previously exist. If the space becomes routine, allowing for different moral and theological points of departure, and reveals a means by which the common good can practically transcend different divides – through the discussion of what a “citizenship narrative” means in that particular context – then there is a basis for all further discussion.

**Second, the space is the *sine qua non*.** If it is established in the aforementioned manner, then it does not matter what the issue is that convenes people to the space. What matters is that social harmony has a chance to actually be lived out in practice, with equal standing and dignity across all sectors – including the religious sector.

Just as priceless is the trust that eventually results between and among people who would otherwise not meet from different sectors. Therefore, it is not *what* but *how* the process is conducted, particularly in the early stages. As with any new relationship(s), the reason one returns to the possibility is because one feels relatively safe to express concerns, and one cares about the topic at hand. The right facilitation is also key to the early development of a space, if trust is to emerge.

Once developed, the trust must be stewarded carefully. For trust can be applied to any situation, often on short notice. If there are people from very different sectors of society who now trust each other enough, they can – by working *together* – help defuse and/or preempt crisis situations from developing.





**The third result is scholarship regarding the issue being discussed.** Initially, the issue(s) that convene the space have to be of great self-interest to the various parties that have not previously met. This is particularly the case, as is most likely, if there is no trust between and among the parties. But once the issue is established, scholarship about it, in the particular context, will also emerge.

This scholarship is quite critical because it provides, hopefully, three of its own results. First, a neutral and comparative point of reference emerges. As people from a particular place consider the experiences of others, it gives permission to think out loud – pointing to the examples from outside the country – without giving away their own particular position. This is especially important in early meetings, when one does not know who to trust. Next, scholarship reveals the kind of baseline knowledge needed for engaging the issue, and therefore presents standards of training and education for those who will be engaging the issue.

**The last result is that should the trust emerge, there is good thinking and scholarship to undergird any eventual policies and actions, by those who have been trained.** This final result is twofold. Over time, sufficient consensus develops among people who would not otherwise meet about how to institutionalize new thinking on a critical issue in which all parties have a stake. More vital still, as a result of this self-interested conversation, sufficient consensus emerges about what it means to steward a common country, or what it means to be citizens, *together*.

Two more questions remain: Are government and religious leaders and their respective communities ready and equipped to engage in a “safe space” about a particular issue that is also about developing a common narrative of citizenship? And, is there a supporting infrastructure of mutual engagement, of interlocking “safe spaces” at various levels of society, where the discussions can take place?

Suffice it to say that it is rather rare where government officials have been prepared to engage religious communities, and rarer still that religious communities have prepared themselves to engage the government. Therefore the first “safe space” often needed is one of education and training within a particular community, preparing individuals for engaging other communities and perspectives in the common “safe space.”

No matter one’s own experiences or opinions of the above, the fundamental question of our times requires this conversation: will we citizens of faith and the world be able to live with our deepest differences?

The remainder of this paper examines these issues in three contexts: (1) migration, integration and social cohesion; (2) religious freedom and protection of minorities; and (3) religion and violence.



## II. MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND SOCIAL COHESION

The International Organization for Migration defines migration as “the movement of a person or group of persons, either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.”<sup>1</sup> This section will focus especially on ethnic and religious minority groups, many of whom are migratory in nature.

The term “social cohesion” has been explored in academia and policy venues since the mid-1990s, but to date there is no consensus over its exact meaning.<sup>2</sup> This paper’s definition of “social cohesion” will be based largely on that used by the OECD in its *Perspectives on Global Development* report: “A society is ‘cohesive’ if it works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility.”<sup>3</sup>

In the same way, the term “integration” as applied to ethno religious minorities can mean different things. This paper’s definition is based on IOM’s description of integration as a “dynamic two-way process of mutual accommodation.”<sup>4</sup> The ideal end-state is when the minority group is loyal to the country while the state fashions a narrative of citizenship that respects the contributions of all of society’s members. Minorities and their unique cultural characteristics are celebrated and not merely tolerated. In this context, the opposite of integration is assimilation in which minority groups are expected and compelled to think and act like the majority culture.

In general, migration typically tends to weaken social cohesion, at least in the short term.<sup>5</sup> Migrants often bring with them values, beliefs, and worldviews which can be vastly different from the majority culture. For countries whose national identity is predominantly based upon a particular ethnicity, religion, or common set of values, the presence of ethnic and/or religious minorities presents a challenge, forcing both state and society to grapple with questions of national identity, citizenship, and social contracts in the face of an increasingly diverse populace. These issues will only become more pronounced as globalization trends facilitate greater movements of people both across and within borders.

Some of the challenges that ethnic and/or religious minorities face include economic marginalization and social exclusion due to both the inherent difficulty in fully participating in an unfamiliar culture as well as discrimination or xenophobic reactions from the majority group. When governments choose an assimilationist approach in response to weakening social cohesion, they not only risk damaging economic growth and development,<sup>6</sup> but in more serious cases, social instability or violent conflict can also occur.

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1 See *Key Migration Terms*, <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/about-migration/key-migration-terms-1.html#Migration>.

2 Jenson, *Defining and Measuring Social Cohesion*.

3 OECD, *Perspectives on Global Development 2012*.

4 IOM, *Dialogue for Integration*.

5 Lanzarotta, “Robert Putnam on Immigration and Social Cohesion.”

6 Easterly, *Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth*.





## ROLES NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE

Successful integration of minority groups into the overall society often requires both government and the grassroots to work in concert with each other. In order for this to occur, a “safe space” must be created in which government officials and legitimate representatives from the minority group can engage in honest and open dialogue over all issues. This space allows people who would otherwise not meet to get to know each other, and in the process break down stereotypes and build up trust.

From this space, local scholarship is produced that makes the case for a narrative of citizenship that welcomes the “other” that is consistent with the majority culture’s self-conception. Upon this scholarship, standards of training and education can be developed to work towards changing mindsets and behaviors of both the state and society overall. “Alumni” of these training programs gradually form a structure of advocacy which is able to influence both legislation and public opinion towards minority groups.

In order to implement the above strategy, the following roles are needed:

- › **Government officials:** For any systemic change to occur, the state with its monopoly of power must be involved. The key is to recognize that governments are not monoliths and to identify particular agencies or individuals who are both influential and who see that it is in the state’s interest to ensure that minorities are integrated instead of assimilated.
- › **Religious leaders of minority and majority communities:** Since minority groups often predominantly identify with a particular religion, religious leaders tend to be viewed with great respect and honor by members of the minority group, sometimes more so than their nominal political leaders. Thus, minority religious leaders must be engaged and included. At the same time, majority religious leaders must also be at the table, else the process will have little chance of becoming locally “owned,” i.e., seen as consistent with the local culture and in the enlightened self-interest of all.
- › **Local scholars and experts:** Academics and experts belonging to the majority group who are like-minded in favoring integrationist over assimilationist approaches play an important role in producing scholarship and commentary which can effectively argue from the point of view of the majority culture how welcoming the “other” is not only beneficial, but also genuine to the culture. This is crucial for influencing the general public and countering xenophobic narratives.
- › **Global scholars and experts:** The presence of scholars from around the world who can offer analyses and lessons learned from their own countries’ experiences provide a politically safe way for local participants to reference international cases as a way of commenting on their own nation’s policies.
- › **A trusted third party:** Finally, a third party actor that is trusted by all the stakeholders and skilled in relational diplomacy is usually needed to bring all the people to the table, especially in situations where there is a great deal of mistrust and suspicion between the government and the minority group.



## RELIGION, MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND SOCIAL COHESION

Lack of spaces for trust- and relationship-building between migrant populations and government officials	Lack of comprehensive and nuanced scholarship on integration, national identity, and social cohesion	Lack of educational and training standards on engaging and integrating ethnic and religious minorities	Lack of advocacy structures for influencing popular attitudes and government policy towards migration and social cohesion
↓	↓	↓	↓
Government and religious leaders (from both majority and minority populations) who view engagement as a strategic means towards enabling integration and greater social cohesion	Researchers and institutional support (governmental and nongovernmental) for research that examines the benefits of integration vis-à-vis assimilation	Multi-vocational and multidisciplinary educational programs designed to change mindsets regarding ethnic minorities and their place in society	Self-sustaining networks of indigenous leaders across government and civil society (including faith-based civil society institutions) who support integration and respect towards ethnic minorities


## EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

- › **Dialogue for Integration: Engaging Religious Communities (DIRECT).**<sup>7</sup> This International Organization for Migration project took place from 2010 to 2011 and consisted of two major components: the first performed fact-finding on the role ascribed to religion in EU member states' national level integration policies and performed surveys of migrant religious communities in six EU countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, and Spain). The second component held multifaith forums in the six countries that brought together migrant religious communities and host country representatives to exchange ideas and knowledge and produce joint recommendations. One of the project's important contributions to the field is the highlighting of the importance of engaging religious leaders in the EU member states' efforts to integrate migrant populations.
- › **"Muslims and a Harmonious Society" project.** From 2008-2010, the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) and its Chinese government think tank partner, the Institute for Ethnic Minority Groups (IEMG), convened four conferences in China. The first three were held in Gansu, Shaanxi, and Xinjiang and focused on the Muslim population in China's western provinces. The conferences brought together local government officials, religious leaders and scholars, and Chinese scholars of religion and ethnic minorities. The conferences focused on the positive contributions that China's Muslims were making to society and how those lessons could be applied to other provinces, which was especially relevant with regards to Xinjiang's Uighur population. The fourth and final conference was held in Beijing and summarized the conclusions from the previous three conferences in a publication which has been published in both Chinese and English.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For more information about the DIRECT project, see: [http://www.iom.fi/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=95&Itemid=82](http://www.iom.fi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=95&Itemid=82).

<sup>8</sup> The English-language version of this publication can be accessed here: [http://globaleengagement.org/content/1209\\_IGE\\_MuslimSociety\\_singlePage.pdf](http://globaleengagement.org/content/1209_IGE_MuslimSociety_singlePage.pdf)



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- › **RfP Myanmar.** In June 2012, religious communities in Myanmar came together to form *RfP Myanmar* as the country's first full-fledged representative and action-oriented inter-religious body for reconciliation, peace and development. *RfP Myanmar* consists of Myanmar's historic religious traditions and organizations including the Buddhist Sitagu Sayadaw community; the Ratana Metta Buddhist Organization; the Myanmar Council of Churches; the Catholic Church; the Hindu Community and the Islamic Center of Myanmar. *RfP Myanmar* mobilizes its existing infrastructure of diverse religious communities and offers a platform for religious leaders on joint advocacy, coordinated program response and training around issues of shared concern. *RfP Myanmar* has dispatched multi-religious rapid reaction mission to conflict areas and engaged in strategic humanitarian assistance aimed at promoting inter-communal harmony. Its project to save vulnerable children is being implemented through the *RfP Myanmar* multi-religious taskforce on child protection.

### III. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Minority groups – whether cultural, ethnic, or religious – often find themselves in the position of being marginalized, excluded from mainstream society, and without equal representation, voice, or treatment. While minority cultures, minority ethnic groups, and minority religious communities have all historically found themselves in a position of deference to the majority, with limits placed upon what most would argue are their most basic rights, it is religious minorities that have been especially vulnerable.

Religion has often served as the greatest and strongest divider of people groups – dividing nationalities, neighbors, and even families. This divide has, at its core, the frailty of human relationships with the “other,” even when that “other” might share one's territory, national history, language and physical attributes. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rising tide of religious freedom violations around the world.

Though this reality has served as the historical narrative of societies for centuries, it also traditionally goes unchanged until such time as the minority group decides or is given a platform to stand in strong opposition to the majority regarding its treatment and position in society. The scale and form of this reaction depends on the historical position of the minority group within the geo-political and religio-social landscape.

However, if the dominant majority continues to ignore the needs and voices of the minority groups, feelings of anger and resentment typically result, which at best may become a danger to the minority-majority relationship, and at worst threaten the security of the majority and the stability of the state. Several chronic conditions often characterize a social context in which no mitigating action is taken to address root causes of religious freedom violations and tensions involving religious minorities:

- › Ignorance and/or feigned ignorance by leaders, and avoidance of problems;
- › Negative stereotypes, misunderstanding, and lack of trust;



- › The minority's social/economic withdrawal under the majority's pressure and manipulation;
- › Government and faith groups' lack of openness to positive change, and their zero-sum attitude about engagement and compromise.

Adding to the difficulty of many religious freedom challenges around the world is that minority religious status often overlaps with other minority identities, such as ethnic, racial, and/or political identities. The challenge of religious freedom restrictions is far more than a matter of formal law; it is also a complex historical, religio-cultural, ethnic, political, and geo-political issue.

## ROLES NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE

Religious freedom and the protection of minorities must be examined through the aforementioned lens of minority-majority relationships. Sustainable transformation of conflicts that involve religious freedom limitations and minority oppression requires a comprehensive analysis incorporating the local perspective, history, and environment. Such transformation also requires the holistic engagement of *all* parties/stakeholders.

While traditional approaches focus on empowering minority groups to raise their voice and advocate for their own freedom, one of the most critical yet often missing elements is inclusion of the majority perspective, voice, and presence in a relational process. In order to successfully change the behavior of the majority towards the minority, the majority mindset of “we have the right to make decisions for you [the minority]” must first be changed. To move towards a new reality for the minority, members of the majority must be inspired and educated such that they may bravely and generously embrace the minority and learn to live with the differences that underscore their marginalization of the other.

At the same time, if minority religious and ethnic groups are to assert their rights as a legitimate member of the national populace, they must also be inspired and educated to constructively engage other religious groups and government officials, and to embrace their responsibility to contribute positively to the common good – a primary necessity for a harmonious society.

In addition, the concept of citizenship must also be examined as the bedrock for a society that is both *just* and *harmonious*. In a “just and harmonious society,” everyone must be valued and positioned as an equal stakeholder, not just a subject of the majority position and values, where all peoples, religious, ethnic, and cultural groups have equal standing, equal civil liberties, and equal civil rights. Taken to its logical conclusion, justice becomes simple fairness, a level playing field allowing societies to move from a current state of conflict or oppression to social “harmony.” This social harmony, though, requires a high tolerance for diversity and difference. If everybody is “equal” only when color, creed, or belief is the same, social harmony is not present. This false assumption of justice or social cohesion belies the true state of social harmony, which accepts diversity under transparent and just rule of law.

With the above as backdrop to identifying and implementing practical solutions, one must ascertain how to best equip and mediate the two groups in order to develop mutually beneficial solutions as well as mutually owned processes. In addition, convincing the minority to patiently and constructively deal with conflicts with the majority should not be underestimated. What's needed is a process of relationship-building, objective inquiry, and practical problem solving – with a strategic array of actors involved. As noted in the prior section on migration and social cohesion, these actors should include



the government, religious leaders of minority and majority communities, local scholars and experts, global scholars and experts, and one or more trusted third-party facilitators/change agents. The specific key roles that often need to be performed/facilitated by a trusted third party include the following:

- › Facilitating recognition and naming of problems;
- › Creating safe spaces for listening and understanding;
- › Equipping and networking;
- › Educating and empowering.

The chart below summarizes the main challenges and key roles in the context of religious freedom diplomacy.

#### RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES: A PROTECTION PLAN/AGENT OF CHANGE

Ignorance and avoidance of problems	Negative stereotypes, misunderstanding, and lack of trust	Minority's withdrawal under the majority's pressure and manipulation	Government and faith groups' lack of openness to positive change, and their zero-sum attitude
↓	↓	↓	↓
Facilitating recognition and naming of problems	Creating safe spaces for listening and understanding	Equipping and networking	Educating and Empowering

#### EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

- › As a wave of struggle swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, *RfP* Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Council convened more than 70 senior religious leaders from the region committed to stand in solidarity with all vulnerable communities in MENA, to advocate for full religious freedom across the region and to call on all religious believers to become a united force to help ensure that governments honor, protect and serve all of their citizens without exception. To operationalize this, *RfP* MENA Council committed itself to develop materials related to United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18, religious freedom, protection of minorities and citizenship and widely distribute them across the region.
- › *RfP* European Interfaith Youth Network is taking a stand against the rise of hate crimes against Muslims, Jews and Roma. In 2012, the group sponsored a conference entitled "Who is my Neighbor? Migration and Xenophobia in Europe," which drew students from across the continent to Valletta, Italy. The students forged ties with peers from other faiths, learned about the plight of migrants and religious minorities, and generated ideas for ongoing collaboration – including a plan to teach primary school students to respect the fundamental dignity of others.



- › In Israel, The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel – a *RfP* affiliate – brings together Israeli and Palestinian teenagers to engage in dialogues about peace, violence and social responsibility. The program, “Face to Face | Faith to Faith” helps participants nurture an understanding of other religions, cultures and people; and increases their ability to collaborate across lines of religion, culture, class and ethnicity.
- › The Institute for Global Engagement has collaborated with the Vietnamese Government’s Committee for Religious Affairs to conduct multiple training seminars for government authorities and registered and unregistered Protestant church leaders on religious freedom. Held in the rural northeast and northwest provinces, these events focused on religious rights, civil obligations, the government’s existing provisions for the protection of religious freedom, and ways to bolster cross-ethnicity unity.

## IV. RELIGION AND VIOLENCE


In the mid-20th century many international relations specialists began to assume that religion was on a historical trajectory toward socio-political irrelevance. The Cold War paradigm seemed to suggest that ideology had superseded other forms of identity like religion as a source of conflict. At the same time, many social scientists were enamored with secularization theory – which assumed that as modernization advanced, religion would be profoundly weakened if not eliminated entirely.

Even before the end of the Cold War there were many signs that such assumptions were incorrect, but the aftermath of the Cold War saw a marked resurgence of religious identity politics and of religiously-motivated warfare and terrorism. Accordingly, religion made a sudden return to the analytical foreground. Samuel Huntington famously argued that a “clash of civilizations,” one defined largely along religious lines, was now determining the primary contours of conflict around the world. Huntington drew particular attention to conflict between the West and Islam. Since 9/11, there have been plenty of people inclined to adopt this Huntingtonian perspective. Empirical research on the relationships between religion and violence has added still more weight to the pessimist side of the scale. For example, empirical data show that religious conflicts are rising as a proportion of all conflict, and that they last longer and involve more fatalities than other types of conflicts.

In short, for anyone inclined to believe that religion is a big part of the problem when it comes to violence, the post-Cold War period has served up plenty of damning evidence. Two critical dynamics need to be emphasized, however.

First, a great many of the causes of religious violence are not rooted in supposedly essential “civilizational” differences but rather in failures in the precise areas discussed in the previous sections of this paper – namely: the failure of both governmental and religious leaders to establish legal and social norms of citizenship that are inclusive of all religious groups – a failure made especially manifest in the areas of integration and social cohesion, and religious freedom.





Second, while religion is part of the problem, it is also part of the solution. The most obvious examples in this regard are the numerous religious groups who see peace-building and conflict resolution as an ethical imperative and an essential part of living out their faith. Such groups have played important and positive roles in many conflict environments.

But the relevance of religion does not end with the activities of groups organized explicitly for “faith-based peace-building.” Rather, religion’s relevance extends to the cultural and systemic preconditions for sustainable security. *Sustainable* security means not merely the absence of imminent threats to physical safety, but also as the presence of the conditions (socio-economic, political, psychological, spiritual) necessary for long-term political stability and social well-being. The critical concept here is “human security,” which recognizes the inherent connection between a failure to meet core human needs and the likelihood of violent conflict. The freedom to adopt and live out religious faith (or to reject religion), is one such core human need.

Unfortunately, the legacy of 9/11 has too often been a mindset that sees repression and social exclusion of certain religious minorities as justifiable in the name of “security.” This rationalization is of course used disingenuously by many authoritarian leaders who have other motivations for their repression. But even in cases where this logic is sincerely believed, it is profoundly short-sighted, as repression of religion is counterproductive to security in the long term; repression frequently just radicalizes rather than pacifies. While governments must of course resort to coercive means in some extreme circumstances, the long-term plan for preventing such dire circumstances from arising in the first place must be the creation of a culture and legal regime of robust citizenship, within which all receive and contribute to human security.

## ROLES NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE

Framed in the more holistic terms of human security, the question is not just how to restrain and reduce religious violence, but how to transform the environment that gives rise to religious violence in the first place. The set of needed roles for this more ambitious and long-term transformational process encompasses all that has been previously discussed in this paper, and really brings us back to the core opening questions: How do we live with our deepest differences? And what is an actionable strategic logic and theory of change by which we can help cultivate a sustainable environment of equal citizenship, justice, and social harmony?

One framework for conceptualizing the needed roles is a “4 S” approach – Space, Scholarship, Standard, Structure.<sup>9</sup>

- › **Space.** Safe and recurring *spaces* for dialogue and relationship-building between government officials and religious groups, i.e., a holistically “top-down/bottom-up” process bringing together the public and private sectors.

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9 Chris Seiple, “Building Religious Freedom: A Theory of Change,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Volume 10, Number 3 (Fall 2012): 97-102.



- › **Scholarship.** Multi-disciplinary *scholarship* conducted on both a local and global/comparative basis that is designed to empirically demonstrate the conditions under which religion either exacerbates security problems or helps solve/prevent them.
- › **Standard.** Comprehensive multi-disciplinary educational and training *standards*, i.e., innovative curricula and educational initiatives that inspire and equip leaders in both the public and private sector, building capacity for practical engagement of these issues.
- › **Structure.** New social *structures* of support for positive policies and programs in both the public and private sector, i.e., networks of likeminded leaders from across different faiths, agencies, and disciplines who are positioned and prepared to act as agents of constructive change and consensus-building, so that positive norms and policies regarding religion, citizenship, and security become fully “owned” by the mainstream political culture.


#### RELIGION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF VIOLENCE INTO SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SECURITY

Lack of spaces for trust- and relationship-building in contexts of religion-related conflict	Comprehensive and nuanced scholarship on the roles of religion in security	Lack of educational and training standards on religion and security that are relevant across faiths, disciplines, and sectors	Lack of social structures of support for positive norms and policies regarding religion, citizenship, and security
↓	↓	↓	↓
Leaders in both the governmental and religious sectors who are intellectually and morally/spiritually equipped, and institutionally supported, to take the initiative in new processes of space-creation	Researchers and institutional support (governmental and nongovernmental) for research that examines the full complexity of religion’s roles vis-à-vis violence and sustainable peace, stability, and social well-being.	Educational programs designed to transcend silos and change mindsets regarding the big-picture of religion-and-security, and thereby leading to new and better training within specific professional/vocational contexts	Self-sustaining networks of leaders across government and civil society (including faith-based civil society institutions) who fully understand not just the peril but the promise of religion vis-à-vis security

#### EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

- › To prevent the recurrence of religiously motivated violence, *RfP* Inter-religious Council of Thailand conducts inter-religious non-violence education and conflict resolution workshops, convenes people of faith with representatives from government, army, police, and civil society organizations, and dispatches multi-religious delegations to conflict affected areas in the south. *RfP* Thailand has received the Official Development Assistance from the government of Japan for its project entitled “Advancing Human Security through Inter-religious Cooperation in Thailand,” through which civil society, government, religious leaders and actors, including women and youth, address the misuse of religious identities to fuel conflict in the south of Thailand. The project provides intensive training for religious leaders and actors on practical approaches to advancing human security, fa-





cilitating inter-religious dialogue and engaging in inter-religious action. Approximately 100 youth leaders from the southern-most provinces are given action-oriented training on conflict prevention and implement inter-religious actions in their respective communities.

- › “Religion, Peace, Security and Co-existence,” Myanmar. Held 30 September to 5 October 2013 and organized jointly by the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy and the Institute for Global Engagement, the “Religion, Peace, Security and Co-existence” conference brought together a cross-section of religious leaders from within Myanmar and also from the broader region (including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Singapore, and the Philippines). In particular, representatives from ethnic and religious minorities such as the Rohingya, Rakhine, and Karen were convened and given a chance to freely speak on their situations in an international forum.
- › “Religion, Security, and Citizenship in Central Asia,” Kazakhstan. Held 29-30 May 2013 and sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Nur Otan Institute for Public Policy, and the Institute for Global Engagement, the conference discussed a range of issues, including religious extremism, religious education, religion in the media, and religion’s role in the public sphere. The conference included religious groups and NGOs that are normally excluded from public dialogue, giving them a safe space to discuss their views with government officials responsible for religion policy.

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## COMMISSION 3

Welcoming the Other through

# Human Development that Respects the Earth







## PART ONE:

# Advancing Human Development

*No one government, no one organization, no one sector acting alone will advance human development*

## INTRODUCTION

The *Religions for Peace* 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly convenes at a most opportune time in the history of international development work. Leaders throughout the world are now reviewing the progress that has been made in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and simultaneously engaging in consultations that focus on setting the priorities of a post-2015 development agenda.

This is a moment for reflection by people of faith, religious communities and religious leaders. It allows us to assess religions' roles and contributions in meeting the Goals and their targets; how much more needs to be done as this MDG era nears its end date; and what religions might do now to take on the development challenges of the coming years.

Now is also a moment for visioning a future where faith communities and religions can best come together to advance human development by promoting the rights and well-being of children and families and the rights and empowerment of women; by working to alleviate poverty; and by caring for the most vulnerable among us as our own.

By their example, advocacy and actions over the past years, religions brought their social, spiritual and moral values to the challenges of the MDGs. They also brought their grassroots networks, which provided channels for communication and education that were, more often than not, crucial to the success of programs and projects that were designed to meet MDG targets.

When religious communities advocated together through their leaders and grassroots congregations, their influence increased exponentially. When they acted together, their efforts were more efficient and sustainable. And when they leveraged their collective power using partnerships with governments, UN agencies, the private sector and civil society organizations, they helped change the world for millions of people, including women, children and young people, and many living in poverty or feeling the pain of conflict.



Whether religions used their particularly unique and powerful positions of influence to advance human development was their choice every single day, in countries throughout the world. There was no dearth of opportunities to show their faith – whether working to empower the poor within legal systems, standing up in the face of violence against women and children, caring for orphans and vulnerable children, or joining global, regional and national campaigns to protect the rights of all people to live free and healthy.

They could have embraced these struggles as their own, or turned away and tended to other things. When religions stepped up to their calling and made the choice to “*Welcome the Other*,” as so many did, the results for individuals, families and communities were significant. The progress generated by the MDGs is more than the sum of statistical successes. The real progress is how different daily life is now than it was before for millions of men and women, children and young people. The difference is felt in lives that have been saved and in futures that have been changed for the better.

But there is still unfinished business from the MDG era along with the anticipated work of the post-2015 development agenda. These challenges – continuing and new – are now before the World Assembly and its member religions, before our World Council and our Inter-religious Councils and our networks of women of faith and religious youth who are increasingly active in every region of the world.

## **I. THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

Since 2001, the international community has been united under the MDG banner in an unprecedented campaign to free the people of the world from poverty. Organized around 8 goals and 21 targets, the MDG campaign was manifest at the global, regional and local levels. Religions and multi-religious networks were strong, responsive and reliable partners at all levels. They raised their voices to advocate for the most vulnerable, infused their values of responsibility to ‘the other,’ and mobilized communities of faith.

With less than two years to go before reaching the 2015 target year for achieving the MDGs, the most recent UN progress report tells of both “significant and substantial progress” and the areas where “accelerated progress and bolder action” are still needed.<sup>1</sup> (See Boxes 1-3.)

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1 United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*, United Nations, New York, 2013.





### BOX 1. THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Goal 1:** Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2:** Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3:** Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4:** Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5:** Improve maternal health
- Goal 6:** Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Goal 7:** Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8:** Develop a global partnership for development

### BOX 2. PROGRESS TO DATE

- The proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been halved at the global level.
- Over 2 billion people have gained access to improved sources of drinking water.
- Remarkable gains have been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis.
- The proportion of slum dwellers in the cities and metropolises of the developing world is declining.
- A low debt burden and an improved climate for trade are levelling the playing field for developing countries.
- The hunger reduction target is within reach.

From *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*.

### BOX 3. WHERE PROGRESS AND ACTION ARE STILL NEEDED

- Environmental sustainability is under severe threat, demanding a new level of global cooperation.
- Gains have been made in child survival, but more must be done to meet our obligations to the youngest generation.
- Most maternal deaths are preventable, but progress in this area is falling short.
- Access to antiretroviral therapy and knowledge about HIV prevention must expand.
- Too many children are still denied their right to primary education.
- Gains in sanitation are impressive – but not good enough.
- There is less aid money overall, with the poorest countries most adversely affected.

From *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*.



As significant as have been the efforts and outcomes of the MDG era, the consultations of the past several years surrounding the post-2015 agenda are setting even more ambitious goals.

Global, regional and local consultations about the future priorities for international development have been remarkable for their number, diversity and transparency. As early as 2010, *RfP*, in collaboration with the UN Millennium Campaign and the World Council of Churches, convened senior religious leaders in New York during the time of the UN General Assembly for a multi-religious consultation on the MDGs. The consultation brought focused attention to some of the unfinished business of the MDGs, including the legal empowerment of the poor, gender equality, maternal health, gender-based violence and multi-sector partnerships.

Parallel processes have been underway on how the post-2015 agenda will be designed and how it will be organized, implemented and monitored. These processes are shared within this paper not only for information, but, most importantly, as potential entry points for advocacy.

In 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), governments established several inter-governmental processes addressing the design of the post-2015 agenda and how it might be implemented. These include the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, and the UN General Assembly Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

In 2013, the UN system undertook several studies on how to transition from the MDGs to a post-2015 development agenda. There were reviews by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the UN Global Compact, and the UN Development Group. The UN has held regional consultations about the post-2015 development agenda in Bali, London, Monrovia and New York. Other consultations have been held online, via teleconferences and during ‘Twitter town halls’. They have included women and young people, representatives from academia, the private sector, civil society and international NGOs.

While final negotiations with UN member states on what the post-2015 agenda will be are ongoing, some common themes have emerged from the numerous reports and recommendations that have been issued from the panels, reviews, processes and consultations. These themes include:

1. The successes of the MDG era are to be sustained and built on; there is value in the lessons on what worked and what didn’t for reaching the targets and achieving the Goals. The fact that global rates often masked disparities, for example, now argues for disaggregated data as necessary for seeing the reality of development at the local level. The fact that the MDGs did not include a mechanism for local monitoring or ways to hold governments accountable exposed a need for a people-centered process and a greater role for civil society organizations.
2. There is unfinished business from the MDGs that demands the urgent attention of the international development community. Recent advances in science and technology make possible a number of dramatic breakthroughs in health, such that no child or mother, for example, should have to die a preventable death. And such that no family should be left to face sickness and death alone, without comfort and care.





3. Despite the gains of the past years, there is ever-growing inequality in development outcomes – driven most determinately by poverty – within and between countries. This inequality threatens peace and security. As poverty begets poverty, compounding family impoverishment and cementing poverty in poor communities, the development community is called to action to break poverty's grip.
4. There are issues largely untouched by the MDGs that cry out for attention, chief among them violence, particularly against women and children. There is great need to prevent such violence, care for those who experience it, and restore to them their human dignity.
5. The ways of the past are of the past; for human development to be advanced, business as usual will not be enough. No one government, no one organization, no one sector acting alone will advance human development. Nor can any one of these multiple stakeholders ensure, on its own, the peace and security that are the necessary foundations for human development.
6. The development agenda for the post-2015 era should be based on the human rights principles of universality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability.



## MDGS AND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Problematic	Progress to date*	Actions needed*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish the unfinished business of the MDGs;</li> <li>• Ensure that international development in the post-MDG era will protect the human rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized; and</li> <li>• Provide for greater accountability and monitoring of progress at the local level, including through disaggregated and accessible data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been halved at the global level.</li> <li>• Over 2 billion people have gained access to improved sources of drinking water.</li> <li>• Remarkable gains have been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis.</li> <li>• The proportion of slum dwellers in the cities and metropolises of the developing world is declining.</li> <li>• A low debt burden and an improved climate for trade are levelling the playing field for developing countries.</li> <li>• The hunger reduction target is within reach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental sustainability is under severe threat, demanding a new level of global cooperation.</li> <li>• Gains have been made in child survival, but more must be done to meet our obligations to the youngest generation.</li> <li>• Most maternal deaths are preventable, but progress in this area is falling short.</li> <li>• Access to antiretroviral therapy and knowledge about HIV prevention must expand.</li> <li>• Too many children are still denied their right to primary education.</li> <li>• Gains in sanitation are impressive – but not good enough.</li> <li>• There is less aid money overall, with the poorest countries most adversely affected.</li> </ul>

\* From *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*.





## II. THE PROBLEMATICS

### LEGAL EMPOWERMENT OF THE POOR

Poverty extends its reach perniciously, breeding on itself as it distorts the lives and compromises the futures of children, young people and families, as well as the health and wealth of nations. The poor are more likely to be sicker, less educated, marginalized and discriminated against by service providers and legal systems. Every day, each of these factors compounds the others, making it more likely that poverty will become even more entrenched, and that the inequalities in development outcomes within and between countries will persist and fester, threatening peace and security for us all.

An estimated 70 percent of the world's population – some 4 billion people – is excluded from equal participation in their societies because they are poor. This includes the 1.2 billion people who live in extreme poverty, or on less than \$1.25 a day. Poor people are found in every region and every country. Almost 414 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, or nearly half the population there, live in extreme poverty, on the edge of subsistence.

Poor families include the millions who go to bed hungry every night. They include the 101 million children under age five who are underweight, and the 43 million who are overweight. Both extremes are signs of children being malnourished. They include the 26 percent of the world's children who show signs of stunted growth, with children in the poorest households more than twice as likely to be stunted as those from the richest.

Poor families include the young people and women who bear the brunt of economic slowdowns in countries in every region, as more jobs are lost and the jobs that remain are low-earning and at high risk, leaving those most vulnerable to poverty even more so.

In Argentina, Indonesia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda, *RfP* has helped advance legal empowerment of the poor, with a focus on women and marginalized populations, through inter-religious and inter-faith councils and networks already existing within these countries. Efforts are grounded in the Multi-Religious Consensus on Legal Empowerment, a position statement affirming religion's role in a process through which the poor and excluded learn how to use the law and legal systems to protect their assets and advance their rights as citizens and economic actors.<sup>2</sup> The process focuses on four rights-based reforms: access to the justice system and rule of law, property rights, labor rights and business rights.

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2 *Religions for Peace*, Statement on The Role of Religions in Advancing Legal Empowerment of the Poor, New York, 2008.



## POVERTY

Problematic	Progress to date	Actions needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An estimated 4 billion people, 70 percent of the world's population, live in poverty, including the 1.2 billion who live in extreme poverty.</li> <li>Poor people live in every region and every country of the world.</li> <li>An estimated 414 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than \$1.25 a day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been halved at the global level.</li> <li>The hunger reduction target is within reach.</li> </ul>	<p>Rights-based reforms are needed in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to the justice system and rule of law;</li> <li>Property rights;</li> <li>Labor rights;</li> <li>Business rights.</li> </ul>

## HEALTH

### 1. Child survival and protection

“ We grieve when we lose a child to an incurable disease, but we hold our heads down in shame when we lose a child to preventable disease or violence. We know that such a loss should not happen, that it is even worse than ‘senseless,’ that it is morally wrong, grievously wrong.

— Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General of Religions for Peace

There has been progress over the past 20 years in reducing mortality rates of children under 5, with a 41 percent reduction in under-five mortality between 1990 and 2011. However, these gains, while encouraging, will still fall short of what is needed to reach the target for MDG 4 – reducing under-five mortality by two thirds by 2015.

Behind every statistic on child mortality there are children. Nearly 7 million children under age five die every year. That's nearly 800 young lives lost every hour, more than 19,000 young lives lost every day. Those are our children dying. They are dying, according to UNICEF, from such wholly avoidable and treatable illnesses as pneumonia and diarrhea, many children weakened by under-nutrition, too frail to stave off death.<sup>3</sup> In 2010 alone, more than half a million children under age five died from malaria, also avoidable, also treatable.

These deaths are increasingly concentrated in the world's poorest regions and countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, one of every nine children dies before age five, more than 16 times the average for developed regions. Within countries, these young children are dying in the poorest areas.

3 [http://www.unicef.org/mdg/index\\_childmortality](http://www.unicef.org/mdg/index_childmortality)





The interventions needed to save these children are well known and widely practiced in richer countries. Existing high-impact, low-cost interventions including vaccines, antibiotics, micronutrient supplementation, insecticide-treated mosquito nets, improved breastfeeding practices and safe hygiene practices have already saved millions of lives. They could save more; some would argue they could save all.

Most young deaths occur in the first month of life, caused largely by premature birth, complications during childbirth and infections.<sup>4</sup> According to a recent report from Save the Children, an estimated 1,049,300 newborns die on the day they are born.<sup>5</sup>

Two thirds of these young infants can be saved, two thirds of these families spared their grief. To question why they are not protected is to question the world's collective accountability. More immediately for this Assembly's discussions, it is to remind the world's religions of their moral responsibility to keep these infants from dying.

Here's what we know about saving young infants: Neonatal deaths can be averted with such simple, cost-effective interventions as attended births and post-natal home visits. They can be averted when mothers have adequate health care during pregnancy; when mothers have enough to eat and access to safe water throughout their lives, when their pregnancies are planned so that their bodies are mature enough and strong enough to bear children; when they go to school as young girls. When mothers are healthy, free of HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases of the poor. When any, many or all of these conditions are met, one-month-old babies can be spared needless death.

Together with the Center for Interfaith Action, *RfP* has undertaken an unprecedented global initiative that will engage religious communities and multi-religious networks around the world in saving the lives of children by promoting and teaching ten simple changes in behavior (*see Box 4*). Through their moral voice and social channels, religions can reach the places where the most hard-to-reach and vulnerable families live and empower them with the information and training that will save their children from disease and death.

*RfP* has also entered into partnership with the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) to undertake a similar outreach in six priority countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

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4 <http://www.healthynewbornnetwork.org>

5 "Newborn Health: The issue" @ <http://www.savethechildren.org>



#### BOX 4. TEN PROMISES TO OUR CHILDREN: RELIGIONS IN ACTION


United in our common goal to save the lives of children in need, we pledge to take action to advance the life-saving behaviors listed below. These priority behaviors – ten life-saving acts for children – can and should be adopted by local families and communities. Doing so will help save the lives and reduce the burden of disease for millions of children. These behaviors are endorsed by UNICEF and other major international aid organizations because they work. Our respective religious doctrines are different, but we are united in the moral conviction that we must save children from preventable death. Thus, we commit ourselves to ensure that our respective faith communities promote these behaviors sustainably, even as we also support additional needed efforts to strengthen public health systems. We ask all, throughout the world, who have held a child in love, with joy for its life, with tears for its pain, to join us in advancing these life-saving behaviors.

**To save and improve the lives of all children, we pledge to promote, encourage, and advocate for the following actions by parents and children:**

1. Breastfeed all newborns exclusively through six months of age;
2. Immunize children and newborns with all recommended vaccines, especially through two age 2;
3. Eliminate all harmful traditions and violence against children, and ensure children grow up in a safe and protective environment;
4. Feed children with proper nutritional foods and micronutrient supplements, where available, and deworm children;
5. Give oral rehydration salts (ORS) and daily zinc supplements for 10–14 days to all children suffering from diarrhea;
6. Promptly seek treatment when a child is sick; give children antibiotic treatment for pneumonia;
7. Have children drink water from a safe source, including water that has been purified and kept clean and covered and away from fecal material;
8. Have all children wash their hands with soap and water especially before touching food, after going to the latrine or toilet and after dealing with refuse;
9. Have all children use a toilet or latrine, and safely dispose of children's feces; prevent children from defecating in the open;
10. Where relevant, have all children sleep nightly under insecticide-treated mosquito nets to prevent malaria, and at the immediate onset of fever seek medical care for children to receive proper malaria testing and treatment.

We are committed to working in collaboration with intergovernmental, governmental and civil society bodies – many of which, including UNICEF and leading bilateral development agencies, have been strong promoters of positive multi-religious action. We urge them to support us to develop simple toolkits and roll-out mechanisms that leaders and congregations of each religion can use to harness their respective beliefs and believers in the implementation of these vital behavioral changes.





## 2. Maternal health and women's empowerment

Were there only one intervention possible in the world's efforts to advance human development, surely the fulfillment of the human rights of women would be an option with the potential for the highest rate of return. No community can hope to be strong, no country can hope to prosper, no region can hope to advance unless all of its people – women as well as men – are full and equal participants in its vital life.

No peace among nations can be secured and sustained until women are a full and equal presence at the peace tables.

No faith complete without women.

Women's value within any society can be measured by the education provided to young girls, the health services available to girls and women, and the legal systems, social structures and cultural practices that protect – or fail to protect – girls and women from neglect, abuse and violence. (*See Box 5.*)

This neglect is obvious in the statistic that 800 of the world's women die every day in pregnancy or childbirth, despite the existence of proven, well-known and relatively low-cost interventions that can save them. Some 90 percent of these lives are lost in Africa and Asia, where the majority of women die in unattended births, from severe bleeding, infections, eclampsia, obstructed labor and the consequences of unsafe abortions.

Gender neglect is also seen as a factor in maternal deaths in the review of the global progress on the maternal mortality MDG, which lags behind all other MDGs. Only half of all pregnant women in developing regions receive the minimum recommended number of antenatal visits (four) that are known to save lives of both mothers and their babies. Despite the fact that adolescent childbearing is risky for both mother and child, more than 15 million of the 135 million live births worldwide are to adolescents; the highest rate of births to adolescents is in sub-Saharan Africa, where child marriages (marriage before 18) are still common.

### BOX 5. "THE RESTORING DIGNITY" PLEDGE

As a person of faith, I am aware that my religion recognizes the fundamental dignity of every woman and man. I know – according to my religious tradition – that the true dignity of every woman is given by and rooted in the Sacred. This dignity is inviolable.

I recognize with deep sadness that violence against women is still prevalent. It occurs in public and in the privacy of the home. It is unspeakably hurtful to women and girls. It also damages families, communities, and ultimately all of us. Violence against women takes many forms, including domestic violence, rape and its use as a weapon of war, the practice of forced marriages of girl children, the bearing of the brunt of extreme poverty and the selective aborting of unborn females, among others.

Eliminating violence against women and girls is both a religious duty and personal obligation. Doing so will also nourish all of us for healthier and more fulfilling lives.



### 3. HIV and AIDS

While scientists search for a vaccine that will stop the spread of HIV and researchers continue their quest for a cure for AIDS, advocates and activists continue to work towards putting an end to the global epidemic by scaling up access to antiretroviral therapy. They have their eyes on a near future date when there will be zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.<sup>6</sup>

There is progress to report in the world's response to AIDS.<sup>7</sup> In 2011, as a result of an increase in the number of people living with HIV who were receiving antiretrovirals, there was a 25 percent decrease in the number of people who died from AIDS-related causes (to 1.7 million) from the peak in AIDS-related deaths in 2005. The number of people newly infected by HIV has also declined, dropping 21 percent from 2001 to 2011.

But the disease still robs. There were an estimated 34 million people living with HIV at the end of 2011, nearly 5 million more than in 2001. About 820,000 young people aged 15-24 were newly infected in 2011, nearly half a million of them women and girls. In certain regions, the Caucasus and Central Asia, the HIV incidence more than doubled since 2001, with 27,000 people newly infected in 2011.

Perhaps the most troubling of all trends is found when we look at what young people know about HIV and how it spreads. In most of the countries with generalized epidemics, fewer than half the young people surveyed have a basic understanding of HIV. In sub-Saharan Africa, the most HIV-affected part of the world, only 28 percent of young women and 36 percent of young men have comprehensive and correct knowledge about HIV.

'Getting to zero', according to UNAIDS, will require "commitment, innovation, sound science and community-centered strategies" as well as "a determination to embrace and respect human rights." UNAIDS has mapped out an approach for getting to zero, a strategy based on four pillars; within each of these there are challenges for religions and opportunities for multi-religious cooperation.

- › **Pillar 1 – Demand.** Strategic actions to enhance the demand for HIV testing and treatment services.
- › **Pillar 2 – Invest.** Strategic actions to mobilize resources sufficient for expediting the scaling up of treatment and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of spending.
- › **Pillar 3 – Deliver.** Strategic actions to close gaps in the HIV treatment continuum.
- › **Pillar 4 – Making it happen.** Ensuring national preparedness to rapidly bring HIV treatment to scale and strategically focus resources on key settings and populations with high HIV prevalence and unmet need for HIV treatment.

6 UNAIDS, *Treatment 2015*, Geneva, 2012.

7 UN, *The Millennium Development Report*, 2013, pp. 34-37.





## HEALTH

Problematic	Progress to date	Actions needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nearly 7 million children under five die every year, mostly from preventable and treatable diseases, such as pneumonia and diarrhea.</li> <li>Most young deaths occur in the first month, mostly from prematurity, infections or complications during childbirth. An estimated 1 million infants die the day they are born. 800 women die each day in pregnancy or childbirth, 90 percent of them in Asia and Africa.</li> <li>An estimated 34 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2011, nearly 5 million more than in 2001; about 820,000 young people, 15-24 years old, were newly infected in 2011, half a million of them women and girls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 41 percent reduction in under-five mortality rates since 1990 when there were 87 deaths per 1,000 babies born until 2011, when 51 babies died per 1,000 born. Yet, the MDG target will not be met.</li> <li>Progress on the maternal mortality MDG lags behind all other MDGs goals.</li> <li>There was progress in HIV and AIDS, as a result of an increase in the number of people with HIV who are receiving antiretrovirals, there was a 25 percent decline from 2005 to 2011 in the number of people who died from AIDS. The number of people newly infected declined by 21 percent from 2001 to 2011.</li> </ul> <p>See: <i>The Restoring Dignity Pledge</i>.</p>	<p>The interventions needed to save the lives of young infants, children under five, mothers, and those vulnerable to HIV and AIDS are well known and widely practiced in richer countries.</p> <p><b>For children under five:</b> High-impact, low-cost interventions such as vaccines, antibiotics, micronutrient supplements, insecticide-treated mosquito nets, improved breastfeeding practices and safe hygiene practices. (See: <i>Ten Promises to Our Children</i>.)</p> <p><b>For infants in their first days and months of life:</b> Attended births and post-natal visits and mothers who are healthy when they give birth.</p> <p><b>For women:</b> Adequate health care during pregnancy and throughout their lives, access to safe water throughout their lives, a quality education, and pregnancies that are planned so that their bodies are mature enough and strong enough to give birth safely.</p> <p><b>For people vulnerable to HIV or living with AIDS:</b> Universal access to HIV testing and treatment, especially for the most vulnerable populations.</p>



### III. FAITH IN ACTION

Now – more than ever before – there is a need for multi-religious cooperation if the international development community is to meet the challenges to human development that are before us. The rights, needs and expectations of the millions of men, women and children who are marginalized and who have been left out of progress in the MDG era are now before this Assembly, our World and Inter-religious Councils, and our networks of women of faith and religious young people.

#### TO END POVERTY

Is there a religion among us that does not see poverty as the most fundamental threat to the right of every one to live a life of dignity? Is there one among us who does not recognize those living in poverty as the most vulnerable? Who among us does not see religions' responsibilities – in the face of all this poverty and its assault on human dignity – to “our other brothers and sisters?”

Civil society organizations, religions and people of faith have many ways they might intervene in the poverty cycle: from mobilizing campaigns around global commitments, to working with governments to ensure appropriate and equally accessible services, to local advocacy for more education for boys and girls alike, to empowering people who are poor with the skills and training that prepare them to be active and productive citizens.

The moral call to the development community, and the challenge to this Assembly, is to translate a commitment to empower the poor in terms of their legal rights into concrete actions that restore hope and possibilities to poor people who are striving to lift themselves and their children out of poverty. Among the ways we can do this:

- › Engage in global, regional and national processes to advance this agenda;
- › Raise public awareness about legal empowerment at the global, regional and national levels;
- › Mobilize the strength of communities to provide legal education to the poor; and
- › Advocate for the reform of legal systems and laws to empower the poor.

#### TO PROMOTE HEALTH

In 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched Every Woman Every Child, a global movement of partnerships advocating for maternal and child health. In his call to action, he set out these expectations of civil society:

- › Develop and test innovative approaches to delivering essential services, especially ones benefiting the most vulnerable and marginalized;
- › Educate, engage and mobilize communities;
- › Track progress and hold all stakeholders (including themselves) accountable for their commitments;
- › Strengthen community and local capabilities to scale up implementation of the most appropriate interventions; and
- › Advocate increased attention to women's and children's health and increased investment in it.





## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The development community now argues that it will be possible in the post 2015 years to reach the “zero goals.”

- › No child will die a preventable death.
- › No woman will die in childbirth or from complications of pregnancy
- › There will be no new HIV infections, no HIV and AIDS discrimination, and no AIDS related deaths

*If this is true, and a realistic and practical goal, what will be religions’ unique contributions to the efforts?*

*If this is more aspirational than realistic and practical, which of the world’s “others” will be left out?*



## PART TWO:

# Protecting the Earth

*It is vital that a spirit of cooperation, rather than competition, prevails in climate talks*

## INTRODUCTION

In September 2012, on the eve of the Inter-Religious Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation, Sewalanka Foundation organised a tour of northern Sri Lanka to speak to villagers about their experiences of climate change. The northern region has only just come out of a thirty year war. In village after village, visitors heard stories of how the climate was changing – droughts, loss of crops and topsoil, salt coming up in the wells, reefs dying off, massive erosion on the coast and flooding.

There was a mixture of anxiety, confusion and resignation amongst the resettled people. Will the climate instability drown their hopes for a peaceful and sustainable future?

In each case the villagers turned back to the temples and churches, to assemble, to pray, to listen to scriptures, to follow fire rituals, and to sustain faith in the message of their religious leaders that all this suffering has a meaning.

Religious leaders all over the planet are faced with the vulnerability, impacts, costs and human suffering which climate change brings down on the planet. In times of crisis, people turn to religious institutions and seek divine sources of mercy and compassion for guidance, succour and assistance. Religious institutions of the world find themselves at the front line of climate impacts.

## I. FROM WITNESS TO COMPASSIONATE ACTOR

Climate change poses great physical dangers: declining agriculture and fisheries, water scarcity, mass migrations, extreme weather events and the burden of these impacts falling mostly on the global poor. The only viable solution is to ensure a globally binding agreement on greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions to avert further catastrophes and an unsustainable climate that will plague future





generations. As we are already past the point of being able to reverse the process of destabilisation of the climate, we have to accept that we cannot get back to 'safety'. Moving forward, we have to find a solution to both the causes and the consequences; enhancing global solidarity and sharing resources to try to finance and adapt to the inevitable consequences we have generated thus far. The longer we delay, the more expensive and difficult are the required responses.

Inherent in understanding both the causes and consequences is the problem of equity and responsibility. Climate change arises from an inequitable abuse of the atmospheric commons. Some people are releasing more GHGs into the atmosphere than others; and as these gases cannot be absorbed by natural systems, they are causing global warming.<sup>8</sup> There is furthermore a relationship between the scale of emissions and the convergence of wealth, power and global influence. Those who are most vulnerable have the lowest emissions and the least political influence. The nature of the problem means that the forum for resolving both the emissions crisis and the equity crisis naturally belongs to the main multilateral system of governance: the United Nations.

Climate change is not something anyone planned or intended. It arises primarily from the burning of fossil fuels, which most people associate with modernisation, mechanisation, energy, transport, health services, infrastructure and comfort. The problem has been unfolding since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and accelerating since the 1950s.

With the scientific evidence initiating in the 1950s and peaking with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1<sup>st</sup> Assessment report in 1990, the global community began to realise that the climate problem was bigger than originally understood and would require a multilateral platform to come to a set of agreed upon, appropriate and binding actions on national governments. In 1992, during the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, known as the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted by the state parties and came into force in 1994. The UNFCCC remains the main global forum for trying to respond appropriately to the threats of climate change and alter our behavior sufficiently to avoid global catastrophe.

In 2013, the UNFCCC is faltering in its attempts to achieve the urgent and serious goals set for it by the global community back in 1992.<sup>9</sup> While the UN system has contributed much to peace and development, it has been relatively less successful as a platform for obliging state parties to achieve and enact a binding agreement to protect the planet from the human causes of climate change. These failures threaten the early extinction of the human species as the ultimate worst-case scenario of the current trajectory.

8 For a summary of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change see <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg1/ar4-wg1-spm.pdf>.

9 There are many analyses of the UNFCCC process. There is general consensus that the process is dragging on without adequate results. Here is one analysis from Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011\\_United\\_Nations\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_United_Nations_Climate_Change_Conference) IIED provides this review of the financing mechanisms within the UNFCCC: <http://www.iied.org/rich-nations-fail-meet-8-climate-finance-pledges-analysis-shows>.



The over-riding diplomatic concern with protecting short and medium-term national interests, with an emphasis on economic competitiveness and conserving current power balances is placing the whole planet at grave risk. Faith movements have a different set of values and priorities than do the politicians; and it may be precisely those perspectives that offer solutions to the crisis. These solutions may be key in helping us reconfigure human society and global governance of our planet.

Increasingly, faith-based leaders, practitioners, organisations, institutions and networks are accepting that they need to move from being witnesses of this unfolding drama to being compassionate actors. The planet seeks moral authority and global capacity to transform the discussions of the problem into positive changes and effective actions. Faith communities are well placed to speak to the human behavioral, moral and ethical issues which underpin the current paradigm and mindset.

In his 2011 address to 130 African religious leaders gathered at the UN Environment Programme headquarters in Nairobi, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner highlighted the crucial role of religious leaders in getting passed the current negotiations impasse.

Mr. Steiner told delegates that it is vital that a spirit of cooperation, rather than competition, prevails in climate talks. “In the climate negotiations, the world’s people are being silenced by arguments, facts and figures that are disempowering. You have immense power to bring back a sense of responsibility to these negotiations.”<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Steiner elaborated on the complexity of the contradiction. The atmosphere is the ultimate type of ‘commons’ – a universal space that no one owns but on which we all rely. Inequalities in resources and energy capacity mean that a small percentage of the planet’s human population are driving climate change, which accelerates the vulnerability of the majority of humans and other species. The UN member states likely do understand the urgency and seriousness of the current and future crisis, but the UN platform is not able to secure an effective binding agreement that would set the global good ahead of the needs of powerful state interests, interests associated with politicians and political parties, rather than the citizens and non-human species within the national territories. The problem requires that those with the most wealth and power need to accept their duties and act in a manner that respects and is compassionate to the needs of those with less wealth, power and influence.

Unfortunately, the energy and climate issues are not isolated from larger and more complex political and economic issues. They form part of a complex set of relationships and systemic ordering of the global political economy, of power and influence. To talk about a solution to the climate questions opens up issues of who has the power to decide, who has the duty to act. We must consider issues of global equity – north and south, rich and poor, historical polluters vs. future polluters, and there are issues of human rights and gender justice. Behind these complex issues, there are ingrained and defensive sources of the powers associated with certain industries (e.g., energy sector, auto-industry, fossil fuel industry, transport sector) and their influence over various political leaders and political parties, including their ability to influence governments and global elites who ultimately control policy decisions.

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10 SAFCEI Press release, <http://safcei.org/african-faith-leaders-a-renewed-moral-vision-is-vital-to-progress-in-climate-talks/>.





It is arguable that over the last fifty years, the fossil fuel industry and our reliance on fossil fuels have restructured the relationship between the private sector and the state; that the state has been transformed by this dependency relationship, and thus, also the question of who ultimately is the custodian of human and other sentient beings' welfare is up for investigation.

In a noteworthy anecdote about responsibilities, when running a workshop for indigenous peoples in Gabon in 2010, the author observed there was a moment of confusion amongst the Baka Pygmy elders. We had just finished explaining carbon cycles in nature and how greenhouse gas emissions from urban economies were creating a thickening of the atmosphere and a disturbance of the global environment and natural cycles. The Baka asked for a slow re-translation to ensure they had correctly understood. They were amazed and perplexed. For several years, they had seen the forest changing, that the seasons were not normal and that nature was becoming increasingly disturbed and disjointed. The elders had believed that they had disturbed the sacred relationship between humans and the forest, and they had thus been carrying out extensive rituals to try to understand what they had done wrong and atone for this.<sup>11</sup>

In the Baka understanding of the world, they have custodianship duties bestowed on them by the forest (as expressed and communicated by *Edzengui*, the physical manifestation of the forest's spirit). It is typical in indigenous peoples' cultures that there is a sense of sacred duty linking the resources that sustain life, given by God / the ancestors / divine natural forces, and the responsibility of humans to act as responsible and moral custodians of the bounty. If nature goes out of kilter, there are duties bearing on the human custodians to assist in rectifying the problem, whether species specific recovery or eco-systemic.

It is this sense of custodianship and duty that is absent amongst those who are the perpetrators of the climate crisis; unlike the Baka elders, they do not feel any moral obligation, no sense of moral dread.

To entertain a question about the relationship between religion and climate change is to re-open questions about religion and power, religion and politics, religion and the state, religion and the economy, religion and global governance. To consider issues of morality and governance obliges us to draw on our respective religious and spiritual understandings of morality, ethics and the human mind.

The UN itself was born within a conceptual dichotomy. It was founded on two opposing principles: 1) The state is sovereign and all powerful over matters concerning the national territory. Decisions can only be made within the United Nations when the designated representative of the sovereign state voluntarily agrees to comply. 2) Human Rights are universal and trump the powers of the sovereignty of the state. Any state that grossly violates human rights is subject to international law, sanctions and interventions as required. In the newest iteration of the UN Human Rights Council, states are obliged to transparently attest to their human rights practices and civil society has the opportunity to present evidence to the contrary.

Climate change obliges us to question the logic of state sovereignty. A national state is not emitting into its own atmosphere, it is emitting into a common atmosphere where all humans and species are subject to the consequences, without having caused the emissions or benefitted from the advantages

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11 See IPCC's report on REDD+ workshops in Africa: <http://ipacc.org.za/uploads/docs/AIPREDDV2.pdf>.



they generated. Human rights now and human rights in the future are severely at risk from historic and current emissions.<sup>12</sup> As suggested by UNEP's Steiner to the African religious leaders in 2011, the nature of the climate problem and the structure of the UN may be at odds with each other.

Climate change is driven by human behavior; human behavior may indeed be influenced by self-interest and even short-term interests, but human behavior also occurs in a social context and is shaped by ethics, values and beliefs. If our behavior is unsustainable, devoid of compassion, and steals from future human generations, as well as non-human sentient beings, then it is clearly wrongful and unwise. Creating the climate crisis with full knowledge of the causes, while alternative clean solutions are available, and simply failing to uphold the global good at the expense of national interests, and one might argue, class interests, suggests we have entered into some kind of self-destructive moral dead-end.

## II. FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES IN CLIMATE ADVOCACY

There are a plethora of cases of faith-based responses to the climate crisis. These range from individual congregations taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint all the way up to global networks directly engaging in the UNFCCC negotiations process. We are also seeing a pattern of greater inter-religious cooperation on climate justice advocacy, which bodes well considering that such climate stresses are also likely to exacerbate inter-communal conflicts.

The scale of the threat to humanity and life on Earth is stimulating a new era in religious reflection, relevance and cooperation. At a time when religion is associated in the mass media with intolerance, extremism, chauvinism and violence, the faith-based climate advocacy is suggesting quite an opposite trend of greater solidarity, inter-religious dialogue, and the possibility that the faith-based social movements are going to be catalytic in the global paradigm shift away from a competitive international system based on infinite growth models and the supremacy of self-managing economics, to a new type of multi-faith, spiritually inspired rediscovery of our place in the web of life, a rediscovery of each other, and a refreshed paradigm of compassionate and inter-dependent living, what Maasai leader Jeniffer Koinante called an ethical system of '*enoughness*'.<sup>13</sup>

In 1986, there was a major gathering of religious authorities in Assisi, Italy, where the WWF celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The event, which was initiated by the Duke of Edinburgh and WWF International, resulted in the seminal Assisi Declarations, a set of calls from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Islamic leaders to their respective spiritual communities to commit to a sacred duty of nature conservation. Baha'i, Jain and Sikh movements later added their own declarations.

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12 For a seminal publication on climate change and human rights, see [http://www.ichrp.org/files/reports/45/136\\_report.pdf](http://www.ichrp.org/files/reports/45/136_report.pdf).

13 See [http://www.ipacc.org.za/eng/news\\_details.asp?NID=282](http://www.ipacc.org.za/eng/news_details.asp?NID=282).





The Assisi process led to the formation of the Alliance of Religions for Conservation (ARC) a major global initiative for faith-based environmental engagements.<sup>14</sup> ARC's focus has been on practical projects and assisting faith leaders and congregations to develop theological expressions of the duties of humanity to nature.

As early as 1988, the World Council of Churches (WCC), a global ecumenical network of over three hundred Christian churches and denominations in 110 countries, was engaging on issues of climate change and was active in the preparations and advocacy by the civil society at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.

The Earth Summit was considered widely as a landmark shift in UN thinking, and more generally in how the environment, sustainability, rights and governance would be seen in coming years. Civil society had previously not been given so much access and status in a United Nations treaty process. The Earth Summit, as expressed through Agenda 21 and the formation of the Major Groups, enshrined the principle that our future would need to be determined by cooperation between all parts of the human society – civil, private sector and state. Notably, the faith-based movements and constituency were not acknowledged by the Rio process and remain technically shut out by the United Nations within the formal Rio Conventions processes.

One of the most powerful and influential voices of global leadership has been His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Orthodox Archbishop of Constantinople. In 1991, Patriarch Bartholomew convened an ecological conference entitled 'Living in the Creation of the Lord'.<sup>15</sup> Since then, he has also organized eight international, interdisciplinary and interfaith symposia on various rivers and oceans in order to draw attention to the plight of the world's waters. In November 1997, the Patriarch pronounced that destruction of the environment and nature was a sin:

“ For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation, for humans to degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands...for humans to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life with poisonous substances-these are sins.<sup>16</sup>

For Conference of the Parties (COP 14) in Poznań, Poland, the Church of Sweden brought together faith leaders from across the planet to generate a multi-faith statement on climate. This led to the *Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto* (2008) signed by twenty six global religious leaders and delivered to the Polish COP.<sup>17</sup>

In 2009, *RfP* held a consultation of senior religious leaders in New York and a Global Interfaith Gathering to ensure that the voices of the religious communities are heard during the high-level event on climate change for Heads of State and Government that was convened by the UN Secretary-General during the sixty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly. During Climate Week, *RfP*

14 For more information on ARC, see <http://arcworld.org>.

15 See <http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-insights-into-an-orthodox-christian-worldview>.

16 <http://www.earthlight.org/news28.html>.

17 The manifesto is available on <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=664984>.



ensured that the religious communities were represented in many of the high profile events to advocate to governments to seal the deal at COP 15 on a climate agreement that is fair, ambitious and binding and secures climate justice for all. Building upon the momentum created in September during the Climate Week, *RfP* facilitated the participation of religious leaders of different religious traditions in the Interfaith Ceremony as well as other events during the COP 15 in Copenhagen.

In 2010, the *Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights* was established by WCC, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, the *Centre Catholique International de Genève*, and the Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council. Brahma Kumaris have been an important ally in the past few COPs, bringing their strong tradition of meditation, reflection and peace building into the global networks of cooperation on climate advocacy.

Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI), a multi-faith platform focusing on environmental sustainability, community involvement in custodianship (eco-congregations), including *RfP* South Africa, and *We have Faith – Act Now for Climate Justice* campaign played a major role in mobilising African faith leaders and congregations to engage in the 2011 UNFCCC COP 17 in Durban, South Africa. Among the various events and initiatives organized by the religious communities was a youth caravan that travelled from Nairobi, Kenya, to Durban, collecting signatures on a petition which they loaded into a wooden arc. *RfP*, Caritas Internationalis and WCC also held a consultation in which religious leaders discussed the ethical and spiritual dimensions of climate change and food security and shared best practices on advocacy, awareness raising and social/community mobilization. The *Advocacy and Action for Climate Change: A Resource Guide for Religious Communities* produced by *RfP* was also launched on the occasion. A Spanish version of the resource guide was launched at the Rio +20 on June 2012 at a side event on the *Ethical and Religious Perspectives on the Future We Want*.

One of the newest initiatives in climate advocacy has been triggered by International Network of Engaged Buddhists (iNEB) in cooperation with Sewalanka Foundation of Sri Lanka and its inter-religious network of solidarity across Asia. On 23-27 September 2012, INEB and Sewalanka Foundation jointly hosted the Inter-Religious Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation.<sup>18</sup> The conference was conducted with support from the IUCN national office for Sri Lanka, the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), and technical support from WWF Nepal.

The Anuradhapura conference drew together over 150 delegates from the scientific community, Christian, Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu and animist practitioners, clergy and civil society leaders from across South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, and delegates from Australia, Europe, Africa and North America.

As an outcome of the conference, a network, tentatively named the Inter-religious Climate and Environmental Network (ICE network), has been set up supported by INEB Secretariat in Bangkok. Islamic organisations in Indonesia are offering to host the next conference in 2014 ahead of the IUCN's influential 6<sup>th</sup> World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia.

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18 Report is available here: <http://safcei.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Sri-Lanka-Interfaith-Dialogue-on-Climate-Change-report.pdf>.





### III. CONCLUSIONS

Climate change has a slow onset, complex interlocking results, and is due to be with us for centuries to come. The global system is failing to address the drivers of climate change which set to undermine progress in development, human well-being, biodiversity conservation and global peace.

The challenge for the faith movements, religious institutions and spiritual communities of the planet is to understand the seriousness of the task at hand, to take the time for theological and philosophical reflection, and to mobilise the clergy and the laity to enact skilful change, inspired by compassion and a reverence of the living world and its abundance. Changes at local level will contribute to responding to the climate crisis. At the same time, we need to engage with multilateral governance, including substantial engagement with the United Nations to ensure that this civilizational challenge becomes a transformational moment in the lives of humanity. Only a binding agreement on greenhouse gas emissions reductions can bring sufficient changes and remove the primary driver.

In the unfolding of the climate impacts and increased vulnerability, we can anticipate that people will turn to their religious institutions for succour and assistance. Even with that supportive relationship, if we fail to get to the causes driving climate change we are wilfully driving our planet to a breaking point. Succour and emergency aid can treat symptoms but not causes.

Religions are built on the principle that sacrifice brings transformation, brings wisdom and blessings. Always wanting more, the crude agenda of the materialist modern world, is not generally believed to bring happiness or satisfaction. We now know it also undermines sustainability. Reverence for God, for our religions and for nature can inspire us to make sacrifices that allow intentional changes to be made, precisely the intentional changes that would be required to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stabilise the global situations as much as is possible.

In a Buddhist idiom, the ego is never satisfied and the more we feed its cravings, the greater those cravings become. It is only by giving concentrated attention to our ethical conduct, in knowing our own minds better, and in choosing the compassionate and skilful path that we find also the path to ultimate liberation.

There are skilful actions which congregations and leadership can undertake to educate the clergy and laity, to bring about immediate changes in how we produce energy and the emission that arise from our daily lives. In theory, if we all responded to the challenges of climate change, the failure of the UN system to come to an ethical and noble solution would not matter. Yet, it does matter. The UN is the highest expression of our duty to the planet, to equity, and to keep our governance capacity at the same scale as our environmental impacts.

For the faith movements of the world to truly bring change to the multilateral environmental negotiations, agreements, norms and principles, requires bringing forth that which is best in all of our religions. It is perhaps one of the most important lessons in this chapter that each of the movements described, and many others not discussed here, have highlighted the importance of inter-religious, multi-faith cooperation in climate advocacy. This is in part due to the global scale of the crisis and



the need for a unified message and approach. It is also to do with the global nature of the relationship between the perpetrators of the harm and the victims of the impacts. Moreover, it is about modelling what we are talking about.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGY

The challenge of climate change for the human population can be represented as below:

**MATRIX OF CLIMATE JUSTICE RESPONSES AND STRATEGIES**

<b>High greenhouse gas emissions</b>	<b>High greenhouse gas emissions</b>	<b>Threats to food &amp; water security</b>	<b>Conflict from climate stresses</b>
↓	↓	↓	↓
<b>Education for public and clergy</b>	<b>Advocacy (national &amp; multilateral)</b>	<b>Adaptation</b>	<b>Preventative peace promotion</b>
↓		↓	
<b>Mitigation</b> (less emissions, more carbon conservation)	+ Inter-religious advocacy coordination + Theological review of man, divine obligations and nature conservation	<b>Faith-based and inter-religious resilience projects</b> (e.g. organic farming, soil conservation, water conservation) + Emergency humanitarian services	Inter-faith tolerance and cooperation promotion





## CLIMATE STABILITY ADVOCACY

Problematic	Progress to date	Actions needed
<p>A call to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage in national and multilateral advocacy to promote ethical and political commitments to a binding agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</li><li>• Help faith institutions and networks understand the causes and impacts of climate change to be effective conduits of education and prevention of conflict and promote community resilience.</li><li>• Engage in a global theological and spiritual reflection on sustainability and our duty to other species and the well-being of the planet.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No binding agreement at the UNFCCC. Kyoto Protocol risks being dismantled.</li><li>• Problem of developing countries reaching the same emissions levels as Annex 1 Developed Countries.</li><li>• Economic national interests are being set above global common good – protection of the current and future climate of the planet.</li><li>• Christian networks have been engaged in climate advocacy at multilateral level, notably WCC and allies.</li><li>• Failure of the mitigation negotiations has opened up adaptation strategies in policy but still underfunded and not fully coherent.</li><li>• Gender awareness of climate impacts is emerging.</li><li>• New IPCC report of 2013 is likely to warn of much more serious consequences and new timelines on climate change and vulnerabilities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environmental sustainability is under severe threat, demanding a new level of global cooperation.</li><li>• Sustained civil society pressure on national states and UN system to come to binding agreement as soon as possible.</li><li>• Actions to build social – ecological resilience, food security and new approaches to agriculture and fisheries.</li><li>• Inter-religious coordination on climate advocacy, at different scales and forums.</li><li>• Collaboration between conservationists, climate scientists and faith institutions and networks to coordinate advocacy and public education – contribute to adaptation, mitigation and conflict prevention.</li></ul>



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## COMMISSION 4

Welcoming the Other through

# Religious and Multi-Religious Education







## *Familiarizing adolescents with their respective faiths as “systems of responsibility”*

### INTRODUCTION

When tensions between religious and ethnic groups escalate to violence, the lack of knowledge and of a welcoming atmosphere combined with long-lasting prejudices lead some groups to fanaticize. It is one of the primary tenets of the Peace Education Standing Commission of *Religions for Peace* that education can break down such ignorance and prejudices, and, in so doing, counter animosities and enmities between different cultural and religious groups.

Religious education can do even more – as it offers assistance and direction to people seeking direction in their lives, helping them in their lives and helping them in their actions.

**Helping people find direction.** Religious education plays an essential part in cognitive learning. When people are well informed, use their knowledge critically and are able to question and analyse, they are less likely to be deceived. Pure ignorance, deliberate distortion and disinformation are all too often the stuff of politics today and, even in matters of religion, are used to create barriers and for defamatory purposes. When people understand the ways in which religious faiths relate to life and meaning, they are able to empathize with others' views and see through the mechanisms that cause ethnic and religious discord and fanaticism.

**Helping people in their lives.** Religious education teaches about the sources of life and of values that transcend superficial pleasures. It teaches how all living things are related and mutually interdependent. Religious education can give strength, support, comfort and courage.

**Helping people in their actions.** Religious communities can offer examples of living together in solidarity, living for one another, speaking up for the weak and disadvantaged – teaching us to cope with the problems of life with a sense of mutual responsibility.

### I. CHALLENGES

The task that emerges for education requires the commitment of the religious communities in cooperation with all people of good will. Young people will only be equipped for living together in a way that will ensure the continued existence of our planet if they respect their fellow human beings, feel responsibility for all the living as well as the inanimate world.

In the field of religious education three ways of learning can be distinguished.




1. **Learning religion** means to be educated and socialized in one particular religious tradition. This is the way of catechesis mainly carried out within the religious communities.
2. **Learning about religion** means to receive knowledge about religions in a neutral way. This would be the main task within public education.
3. **Learning from religion** means that interaction with religions can help the development of personal orientation and identity-building. This is relevant for education in religious communities as well as in public education. Religious education in religious communities has to take into account the pluralistic and often secularised contexts of the learners, and religious education in public schooling should provide an encounter with religions vis-a-vis living communities, rather than with neutral facts.

## CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS

The concrete contextual conditions for inter-religious and values education vary from country to country.

- › Some countries maintain a highly developed infrastructure where religious education and values education have a continuous history. This is exhibited in syllabus development, the production of textbooks and teaching materials and in university-level teacher training.
- › There are other countries where religious education is very weak. Teaching materials and syllabi are few or do not exist at all, and teachers have little or no opportunity to gain the necessary skills.
- › In the majority of countries, religious communities carry more responsibility for religious education than does the state. There are countries where religious communities and the state cooperate on issues of religious education, which can be fruitful. However, in some cases there is almost no control of the contents, aims and methods by state or independent pedagogical institutions.
- › Inter-religious cooperation concerning religious education in public schooling and also in the pedagogy of the religious communities themselves is still very rare. This is a crucial point for countries that still have segregated societies. However, in countries without tensions between religious groups, inter-religious cooperation concerning the presentation of different religions in textbooks and syllabi is mostly undeveloped.
- › There are still few examples of direct encounters with the various world religions in the pedagogical field, which could include, for example, visits to places of worship as part of “outdoor schooling.” Additionally, there is little recognition of the rich cultural heritage and influence of religious traditions in different parts of the world. Historical conflicts between and among religious communities should also be taught and discussed.
- › Research examining students’ identity development, as well as their religious and philosophical interests and questions, in a pluralistic society is just in the beginning stages and in only a few countries.



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- › There are too few examples of learning on a “neighborhood” level, which could include religious education in schools, but also in cooperation between schools and religious communities.

Further challenges have been identified in the KAICIID project “The Image of the Other”:<sup>1</sup>

- › There are helpful recommendations by UNESCO and other educational bodies, but they are only available in a limited number of languages and are not sufficiently disseminated or used.
- › Several organizations currently working on intercultural and inter-religious education have a long-term commitment to working on perceptions of “the other”. However, not enough research and impact studies have been done to evaluate such initiatives or make them accessible to policy makers. There are far too little empirical studies concerning the convictions and interests of young people as relates to values, religions and world views.
- › There are many recommendations on an international level, but implementation is lacking, primarily due to weak commitment at national levels. There is no network for sustained dialogue between the multiple stakeholders in the field of intercultural and inter-religious education.
- › The educational realities in the different regions of the world and also within each region are very diverse, requiring multiple strategies and interventions to make changes effective.
- › Currently, all stakeholders face the challenge of too little exchange and cooperation.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION**

- › Governments and their cultural authorities are asked to open their educational systems to basic religious and inter-religious learning.
- › Universities and educational institutions are asked for input on holistic approaches for values and tolerance education that includes religious and inter-religious elements.
- › Intergovernmental organizations are asked if they are able and willing to commit to a new approach to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.
- › Religious communities are asked what they can do to assist in the development of new models for open and welcoming encounters between and among religious and cultural groups.
- › All stakeholders are asked for improving exchange and cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> The following arguments are taken from the draft report of the KAICIID-project “The Image of the Other”. Interreligious and Intercultural Education. Best Practices in the Europe-Mediterranean Region. Working Session 22 May 2013.



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- › *Is the problem sufficiently described? Are there other viewpoints to be recognized?*
- › *What seems to be the primary deficiency? Does this vary across contexts and environments?*
- › *Which of the stakeholders are the most difficult to convince of new endeavors in religious and multi-religious education?*

## II. INTERVENTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

When working towards “*Welcoming the Other*” we should draw on the spiritual, ethical and social potential of religious communities. Religions are concerned with giving meaning to life, interpreting the world, and are not only focused on short-term goals.

Being committed to non-violence and respect for life, to solidarity and a just economic order, to tolerance and a life of truthfulness and to equal rights and partnership between men and women – these convictions are common in different religious traditions (and still often wait for realisation in the religious communities themselves). This means that religions have unique “treasures” to contribute to society that they could use in cooperation with one another and with all “people of good will”, rather than viewing other religious communities and world views as enemies or competitors. The fact that most religions are not nationally bound but are manifested through worldwide communities – as “global players” on the one hand and as advocates of the different contexts and cultures they live in on the other – should be seen as an advantage.

Tasks for religious communities in this respect are first to vitalize their own principles of belief in an open way that opposes intolerance. It is essential for religious/ethical education to assume the task of familiarizing adolescents with their respective faiths as “systems of responsibility”. When people feel at home in their own faith and when they are familiar with the roots of their own religion and culture, they can provide the basis for a serious dialogue.

At the same time, all religious/ethical education should be accompanied by a new approach to engagement that respects people of other faiths and their values and ways of life. Adolescents should be prepared for ways of living together without the burden of prejudicial barriers, in an environment conducive to listening to and learning from one another, opening up new horizons to all sides. This way of overcoming prejudicial barriers is an essential contribution to peace education, which is often a task taken on by religious communities.

It is important to recognize that prejudices towards others are founded in preconceived opinions. Trust will grow in dialogue only when dialogue partners can perceive that they are not being forced into a dogmatic scenario that does not correspond to one another's understanding of his or her faith. This means that dialogue partners must try to learn about the other's faith from the other's perspective





and, with sensitivity, seek out understanding through the religious traditions and writings of the partner. Each dialogue partner must respect the differences between them. Consequently, there is a great need to develop and strengthen religious and inter-religious learning in formal, as well as informal, education.

Some selected projects are described below in order to show the wide range of religious education initiatives already existing, but that, until now, have not been bound into an overall network. The projects presented cover different levels of engagement, dialogue and learning, and may help to systemize the efforts for “*Welcoming the Other*” through: 1) the development of teaching materials focused on religions and ethical values; 2) study programs for cross-cultural learning; 3) scientific studies pertaining to the field of textbook and media research and development; 4) dialogue groups focusing on Holy Scriptures, spiritual sources and inter-religious commitments within religious traditions; 5) youth seminars and exchanges in situations of religious-ethnic tensions; 6) initiatives of religious communities in cooperation with public institutions as for example city agencies, schools and academic institutions; and 7) building up regional inter-religious networks on Peace Education.

### **THE INTER-RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL WORK OF THE GLOBAL ETHIC FOUNDATION TÜBINGEN**

The Global Ethic Project, initiated by Professor Hans Küng, promotes a positive vision in contrast to Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis. From its inception, the Global Ethic Foundation has consistently attempted to make the substance of its work accessible to teachers and has developed pedagogical resources. The Global Ethic Foundation has offered courses and training sessions for teachers about the world’s religions, influencing syllabus development and textbook writing. (<http://www.weltethos.org>)

### **INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING AND SOLIDARITY THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION**

The Adyan Foundation (Beirut/Lebanon: led by Prof. Dr. Fadi Daou and Dr. Nayla Tabbar; <http://www.adyanvillage.net>) provides courses, teaching and structured encounters of students and educators to:

- › Raise awareness on the grassroots level (Youth, CSO, FBO, etc.) on religious pluralism, geopolitics of religions and interfaith relations;
- › Introduce education on inclusive citizenship for religious diversity and coexistence into the national educational policies and programs for schools;
- › Empower teachers, trainers, youth leaders and policy makers in religious pluralism, multifaith education and inclusive citizenship;
- › Foster cross-cultural Arab-West dialogue and mutual understanding.

### **DEVELOP AND EXPAND INTERFAITH NETWORKS AND SPIRITUAL SOLIDARITY**

In partnership with Tischner European University (Poland), Gregorian University (Italy), Notre Dame University (Lebanon) and Ahram Canadian University (Egypt), Adyan developed and implemented in 2010/2011 its first e-course on “*Diversity and intercultural dialogue*”, gathering 18 students and



three teachers from the above-mentioned universities. The students developed, in Euro-Arab and Christian-Muslim groups, four projects that they were invited to present in an international conference on intercultural education and peace-building in Italy.

In partnership with Vienna University (Austria), Cairo University (Egypt) and Notre Dame University (Lebanon), Adyan developed in the fall 2012/2013 its second e-course entitled “*Religious minorities and public life in Europe and the Arab World*”.

Using the same methodology of cross-cultural education on religious diversity, interfaith relations and public life, Adyan then developed a formation program that targets young professionals, with the goal of turning them into “Leaders for Interreligious Understanding” (LIU). The LIU program gathered four CSO partners from Egypt (CEOSS), Lebanon and Syria (FDCD), and Denmark (Danmission) as well as Adyan. Thirty-one young professionals from Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Denmark, and from a variety of professional backgrounds (i.e., politics, religion, media, CSO, education) graduated from the first program with the certificate of “Leader for inter-religious understanding”.

The young leaders then designed and implemented activities for their own professional networks to provide understanding among people from different religious backgrounds.

### **INTER-RELIGIOUS TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT – PERSPECTIVES FROM THE RESEARCH PROJECT “THE REPRESENTATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN TEXTBOOKS OF COUNTRIES WITH AN ISLAMIC TRADITION”** (led by Johannes Lähnemann and Wolfram Reiss)

The textbook presents the different religions that can help students achieve fundamental knowledge and an attitude of “*Welcoming the Other*.”

A specific goal of the project has been to systemize findings in a way that can be transposed to inter-religious textbook development. Consequently, a consultation process was initiated with colleagues from Austria, Egypt, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Iran, Jordan, South Africa, Switzerland and Turkey. A proposal for inter-religious textbook development was designed and, at a symposium during the X<sup>th</sup> Nuremberg Forum (2010), elaborated in detail – as possible guidelines for authors and publishers, for education authorities and curriculum planners<sup>2</sup> – standards showing how inter-religious issues should be handled in curriculum and textbook design, including:

- › Portraying the religions in an authentic, professionally sound way;
- › Developing a dialogue-orientated interpretation of religion and belief;
- › Portraying the religions and their importance in the lives of real people;
- › Conveying a differentiated view of history;
- › Taking account of the cultural heritage and contextuality of the religious communities;
- › Dealing openly with the topical issues of mission, tolerance and inter-religious dialogue;
- › Finding common ground in ethics;
- › Considering the life conditions of the students and the relevance for religious learning;
- › Portraying religions vividly and age-appropriately.

<sup>2</sup> J. Lähnemann: Interreligious Textbook Research and Development: A Proposal for Standards – In: M.L. Pirner/J. Lähnemann (Ed.): *Media Power and Religions. The Challenge Facing Intercultural Dialogue and Learning*. Frankfurt/M. 2013, p. 147-159.





It is important that the encounter with the world of religions is open in such a way that teachers, as well as students, are not forced to accept a specific religious viewpoint. The multiplicity of perspectives offered within the religious traditions, as well as the critical view from outside should be guaranteed to encourage vivid, enriching and critical learning.

**OPEN DOORS / HOPEN DEUREN** – a project of *RfP* Belgium (<http://www.wcrp.be/100-portes-deuren-doors/index.htm>), led by Yolande Iliano – Co-founder, Coordinator.

The project is an example of informal learning, within the context of cooperation among city authorities, schools and religious groups, based in the world of the child's imagination and inspired by the idea of "doors" and the many physical and abstract associations this theme aroused in children of all social, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds.

The aim of this project is diversity education and contains the following elements:

- › Leading to better knowledge of oneself;
- › Looking at the diversity of interpretations, to discover the Other as different without value judgment or hierarchy;
- › Educating for a culture of openness;
- › Underlining the enrichment gained by diversity;
- › Combating generalizations, categorizations, stereotypes, discrimination and any expression of same through violence;
- › Encouraging action and universal commitment.

Activities start with observation and interpretation of five paintings. This leads children to begin to reflect on and come to grips with self through art, as interpretation is the prime indicator of self-knowledge. The learning process then leads from a personal, individual view to a wider view of community, culminating in the universal. The project starts from a picture (and other activities) to encourage the discovery of the Other without value judgment or hierarchy and underlines the enrichment gained by diversity. Additionally, the project focuses on possible incentives of committing to peace as an universal citizen.

In Antwerp this project was set up with the enthusiastic cooperation of 600 pupils and their teachers from all types of schools, and not less than 15 cooperating groups and religious communities. This project idea and concept could easily be adopted by other countries and cities, especially where inter-religious groups or councils already exist.

#### **THE "LATIN AMERICAN INTER-RELIGIOUS NETWORK ON PEACE EDUCATION" (RILEP – <http://.erb.unaoc.org>)**

The "Latin American Inter-Religious Network on Peace Education" is an initiative of *Religions for Peace* Latin America and the Caribbean that gathers representatives from the main communities of faith in the region. The objectives of RILEP are:

- › To promote peace education in religious communities, particularly in their educational frameworks, through mutual understanding and fraternity, overcoming all kinds of prejudices;



- › To establish a permanent space of liaison for the purpose of facilitating inter-religious exchange and training of educators in issues of peace for Latin American religious communities; and
- › To use information and communication technologies (ICT) to promote a culture of peace, from an interfaith and Latin American perspective.

The RILEP was established in 2004 by *RfP* Latin America and the Caribbean with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Since its founding, the RILEP has held four meetings of religious educational organizations in Latin America. The first was held in Santiago de Chile, on 16–17 November 2004, the second in Buenos Aires, on 14–15 December 2005, the third in Rio de Janeiro, on 12–16 September 2007, and the fourth in Montevideo, on 1–5 November 2009. The latter two events were supported by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Vision.

*RfP* Latin America and the Caribbean and UNESCO are continuing to promote the RILEP as a key stakeholder for mobilizing a culture of peace within the religious education of Latin America. They are strengthening the National Groups of RILEP in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, to develop activities for students of different religious educational institutions, devoted to mutual understanding and joint social action, and based on solidarity and brotherhood.

#### **EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COORDINATING COUNCIL IN ISRAEL** (<http://www.icci.org.il>) led by Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish

The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI), established in January 1991, is comprised of more than 60 Christian, Muslim, and Jewish institutions and organizations. ICCI also serves as the Israeli affiliate of *RfP* as one of the Israeli members of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ).

It is a great challenge to build bridges between Israeli and Palestinian people due to the existing physical and mental barriers and hurts of past and present. With that in mind, the “Face to Face / Faith to Faith” project focuses on the development of youth leadership with the goal of promoting learning about the Other and recognizing the narratives and the experiences of the Other.

For the past 11 years, ICCI, in partnership with the Auburn Theological Seminary of New York and local groups in Northern Ireland, South Africa, and the U.S.A., has offered a dialogue and leadership program for Jewish, Christian and Muslim youth. The program includes attending a two-week summer intensive experience in the U.S., as part of a comprehensive year of dialogue and action projects in Jerusalem. Upon returning to the Middle East, the “Face to Face” participants engage in bi-monthly dialogue sessions, follow-up activities that focus on “getting to know the Other in Jerusalem,” and community service and leadership training. The program culminates with a project designed and led by the youth in order to bring the lessons they have learned back to their communities and to put their leadership skills into action. In order to affect more people, ICCI also facilitates a dialogue group for parents of “Face to Face/Faith to Faith” participants, works with the participants’ high schools, and maintains an active network of alumni who continue to work for peace and coexistence.





This year (2013), ICCI is embarking on a completely revised “Face to Face” program in the region, with youth leadership from East and West Jerusalem, which will have more impact on the community, following an intensive summer camp experience in Israel this summer.

“Palestinians and Israelis for Interreligious Dialogue and Action”, ICCI's Alumni Community for graduates of the youth and young adult programs, commenced its activities in 2011. There are now over 200 graduates of the youth and young adult programs of the last 12 years. The program aims to provide ICCI alumni with a long-term framework for engaging together in dialogue and social activism.

Other organizations, projects and initiatives with multi-religious education impact in the Holy Land and in the Middle East include:

- › The educational work of the **Peace Village Neve Shalom – Wahat al-Salam** where Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel – Jews, Christians and Muslims – live together (<http://nswas.com>).
- › **The Interfaith Encounter Association**, consisting of 50 religiously mixed groups that regularly meet on both sides of the “Green Line” in Israel and Palestine (Director: Dr. Yehuda Stolos – <http://interfaith-encounter.org>).
- › **The Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem** – a Palestinian organization that furthers education, peace building and dialogue in the Palestinian cities of Bethlehem, Ramallah and Hebron (Director: Fuad Giacaman – <http://www.aeicenter.org>).
- › **The School Talitha Kumi in Beit Yala** (<http://www.talithakumi.org>) and **the Schneller Schools in Amman/Jordan and Khirbet Kanafar/Lebanon** (<http://www.schneller-school.org>) in which Christian and Muslim students of all denominations are educated together, learn together and about each other and cooperate for the future of their countries.

## OTHERS

There are many more projects that have a learning dimension and help in the promotion of “*Welcoming the Other*”. Many, but not all, of these projects offer examples of programs promoting common action for human rights, the ending of violence and protection of the environment. The below are just a few examples:

- › **The “Restoring Dignity” project** of RfP's Women of Faith network<sup>3</sup> is an international initiative (with meetings, training, exhibitions, presentations and a vivid toolkit) working out what the world's major faith traditions teach, each in its own way, about the inviolable dignity of the human being as rooted in the Sacred. While respecting religious differences, the “Restoring Dignity” project draws on the commitment and resources of faith congregations, institutions, communities and individual believers to bring an end to violence against women and girls.

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3 <http://religionsforpeace.org/file/resources/toolkits/restoring-dignity-toolkit.pdf>



- › **The “Arms Down” RfP Youth Campaign<sup>4</sup>** is gathering signatures to ask the United Nations to: 1. Abolish nuclear weapons, 2. Stop the spread and misuse of weapons, and 3. Use 10 percent of military budgets for the Millennium Development Goals.
- › **The “Spirit in Education Movement” (SEM)** in Thailand, initiated by Sulak Sivaraksa, is an alternative college founded in 1995. It offers a spiritually-based, ecologically-sound, holistic alternative to mainstream education. Its philosophy is rooted in Buddhist wisdom and a deep concern for ecological sustainability and social justice. The founders realize that mainstream education in South East Asia is not in tune with the realities of the changing world. Consequently, SEM has provided many courses promoting interaction between alternative thinkers of the West and the best-minded of Asia.

The projects summarized above teach us that educational activities need to be contextualized. The problems and challenges of each specific environment have to be analyzed, the framework of formal and informal educational possibilities has to be taken into account, and resources have to be carefully examined.

#### **POINTS OF DISCUSSION IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION COULD BE:**

- › *Are there more “religion-specific assets” that are not named in this paper?*
- › *Are there other types of projects for learning about each other, learning together and learning in co-operation?*
- › *Are there projects that have undergone a valuable evaluation process?*

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<sup>4</sup> <http://armsdown.net>





### III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MULTI-RELIGIOUS ACTIONS

The project examples discussed above show the wide range of activities that are implemented on various levels and contexts and highlight how much more is done and how much more is possible than is commonly known by the public, or even by religious communities. In order to inspire religious communities, inter-religious councils and groups to further action, continuous and professional networking is needed, through

- › Initiating systematic approaches to cross-cultural and inter-religious exchange, as well as evaluations of methods, experiences and outcomes of religious and multi-religious learning;
- › Encouraging new actions in the specific religious and educational contexts of the respective regions, countries and districts;
- › Looking for opportunities of collaboration between religious communities, inter-religious councils and the stakeholders of public education in order to incorporate religious and multi-religious learning in syllabi, teacher training and the development of textbooks and educational media;
- › Cooperating with institutions and promoters of intercultural education (UNESCO, Alliance of Civilisation);
- › Develop educational programs.

The different branches and levels of the *RfP* family should engage in education according to their specific strengths and the structures of educational possibilities in which they can and do work:

- › At the global level, *RfP* representatives, in cooperation with stakeholders like UNESCO and the Alliance of Civilisations, should advocate for the need for and possibilities of religious and multi-religious education.
- › At the regional level, the Latin American Inter-Religious Network on Peace Education (RILEP) could be an example of how to promote peace education in religious communities, particularly in specific educational frameworks, through mutual understanding and fraternity, overcoming all kinds of prejudices.
- › At the national level, the collaboration between religious communities, inter-religious councils/groups and the stakeholders of public education should improve curriculum development and teacher training as well as the educational programs of the religious communities themselves.
- › At the local level, inter-religious groups should be the initiators of meetings, dialogue and cooperation between the religious communities. These activities, themselves, also act as educational ways of “*Welcoming the Other*”.



- › The Women of Faith network could widen its range of campaigns, drawing on the example of the project “Restoring Dignity” and taking into account the prominent activities of women in religious affairs worldwide and the need for advocacy to address their often marginalized and neglected security and rights needs.
- › The youth network, through their multi-religious meetings and youth camps, provide a special opportunity for inter-religious learning. It is often difficult to engage young people in long-term projects and memberships, because many are struggling to create successful lives for themselves through education, training, and new jobs. Common activities and projects can be a means to experience the possibilities of multi-religious collaboration.

**POINTS OF DISCUSSION IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION COULD INCLUDE:**

- › *How can we initiate stronger networking within the RfP family and in cooperation with other stakeholders for religious and multi-religious education?*
- › *How can we articulate the need for religious and multi-religious education in secular contexts?*
- › *How can we proceed in contexts where there are segregated societies?*
- › *How can we encourage a stronger engagement of youth in the fields of multi-religious encounters and cooperation?*





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