

13-17 OCTOBER 2020

TO THE G20 LEADERS:

A CALL TO ACTION

// RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR POLICY ACTION FROM
THE G20 INTERFAITH FORUM
IN SAUDI ARABIA



EMPOWERING PEOPLE

SAFEGUARDING THE PLANET

SHAPING NEW FRONTIERS



G20
INTERFAITH
FORUM
COMMUNIQUE

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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the co-organizers of the G20 Interfaith Forum 2020: the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (NCIRD), we are proud to present to the G20 Secretariat the following summary report of recommendations. These recommendations were gathered over a period of six months, from June-October 2020, and owe much to the time, expertise and commitment of hundreds of religious leaders, policymakers, youth and experts from faith-based and multilateral organizations, academic institutions, and civil society, who came together in six regional consultations and a global Forum. Their discussions outlined how religiously-linked and religiously-motivated organizations and networks can contribute to achieving the policy agendas of the G20 process, with a particular focus on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, advancing peace, empowering people through development agendas that promote education, oppose corruption, empower women, and reduce structural inequality and racism, and fostering common action to protect the planet.

The organizers of the G20 Interfaith Forum extend their sincere gratitude to the host country of the 2020 G20 Summit, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for their support and engagement in this process. While the COVID-19 pandemic made a much-anticipated physical Interfaith Forum in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia infeasible, we thank the G20 Secretariat for their continued hospitality in these difficult times.

It is our hope that the recommendations contained in this report will enrich the policy deliberations of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Riyadh, and beyond, and encourage greater collaboration between public and religious institutions in general, and, through the recognition of the G20 Interfaith Forum as an official engagement group to the G20 process, lead to a greater recognition of the contribution of religious institutions to global policy agendas

6 November 2020

Sincerely,



Faisal bin Muaammar,
Chair of the Executive Steering Committee for the
2020 G20 Interfaith Forum and Secretary General,
KAICIID Dialogue Centre



W. Cole Durham, Jr.
President,
G20 Interfaith
Forum Association



H. E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos
High Representative
for the United Nations Alliance
of Civilizations



Abdullah Alhomaidd
Secretary General
National Committee for Interfaith and
Intercultural Dialogue Kingdom of Saudi Arabia





ABOUT THE G20

Interfaith Forum



The G20 Interfaith Forum:

VISION AND

THE G20 INTERFAITH FORUM IS AN ANNUAL PLATFORM FOR A NETWORK OF RELIGIOUSLY LINKED INSTITUTIONS AND INITIATIVES TO ENGAGE ON GLOBAL AGENDAS RELATED TO THE G20. ITS GOAL IS TO CONTRIBUTE MEANINGFUL INSIGHT AND RECOMMENDATIONS THAT RESPOND TO AND HELP SHAPE THE G20 AND THUS GLOBAL POLICY AGENDAS.

The Forum is the culmination of a months-long process of meetings between hundreds of leading religious leaders and policymakers, experts and representatives of faith-based organizations from 90 countries on five continents. Delegates meet to discuss and identify joint solutions to some of the most important issues of the day, including protecting the global environment, access to education, gender equality, countering hate speech and alleviating the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In these trying times, when the scourge of

COVID-19 is causing unprecedented global economic and social dislocation, policymakers should recognise that for over 80 per cent of the world's population, the prism of a faith tradition affects day-to-day life, norms, and relationships.

Religious leaders in many parts of the world go far beyond conducting worship and pastoral oversight. Their leadership exemplifies the spiritual and practical ideals of charity, security, common purpose, human rights, and cohesiveness for everyone, including the most vulnerable in all societies.

Recommendations considered during the Forum are grounded in the experience and wisdom of the world of faith and the experience and insights of religious actors and institutions. Proposals address all aspects of the global human development endeavour as framed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

RATIONALE

THERE ARE FOUR GOVERNING PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN ALL DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. THESE ARE:

A Enrichment of responses and implementation at national levels from systematic engagement of religious actors

C A constant and renewed focus by the G20 on vulnerable communities and the search for peace

B Formal status of engagement group to the G20 for interfaith actors, which would assure systematic engagement with other sectors as well as G20 leaders

D Priority attention to engaging religious communities in development, testing, and distribution of an anti-COVID-19 vaccine.

About the G20 Interfaith Forum:

Beginning in Australia in 2014, the G20 Interfaith Forum has convened annually in the G20 host country. Over the years, the Forum has met in Australia in 2014, Turkey in 2015, China in 2016, Germany in 2017, Argentina in 2018, and Japan in 2019.

On 13-17 October, the G20 Interfaith Forum convened virtually for its seventh annual gathering in Saudi Arabia.

Past Forums have encompassed a series of

wide-ranging agendas, including economic models and systems, climate change, gender equality, families and children, health, education, freedom of religion or belief, global security, governance and the rule of law. The agenda for each Forum is framed by the host country and a changing group of partners, taking into account annual G20 priorities, outlined each year by the host government. These priorities highlight issues recommended to G20 leaders by various networks of religious organizations and interfaith actors.

The Road to Riyadh: G20 Interfaith Forum 2020

For the first time since the G20 Interfaith Forum was launched in 2014, six regional consultations were held in Africa, the Arab region, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. While each region made recommendations based on different priorities and challenges, the consultations highlighted the engagement of religious leaders and communities in relief services, humanitarian aid and support in every part of the world. A Youth consultation and a KAICIID Fellows consultation were also part of the engagement process prior to the Forum.

All of the consultations aimed to engage re-

gional actors in debates on the needs and challenges within their respective environment that should be flagged to the G20 Interfaith Forum as well as the G20 Leaders' Summit. Depending on the specific contexts, objectives were adjusted to reflect furthermore the regional specificities regarding themes to be discussed and objectives to be achieved.

The thematic focus of the regionals reflected the priorities of the 2020 G20 Leaders' Summit host country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and are guided by issues of continuing concern to G20 Interfaith Forum participants since its inception.

Hence all regionals developed context specific themes which reflected the priorities below:

- **Empowering People** by unleashing opportunities for all, including in particular empowering women and youth;

- **Safeguarding the Planet** by fostering collective efforts to protect our global commons;

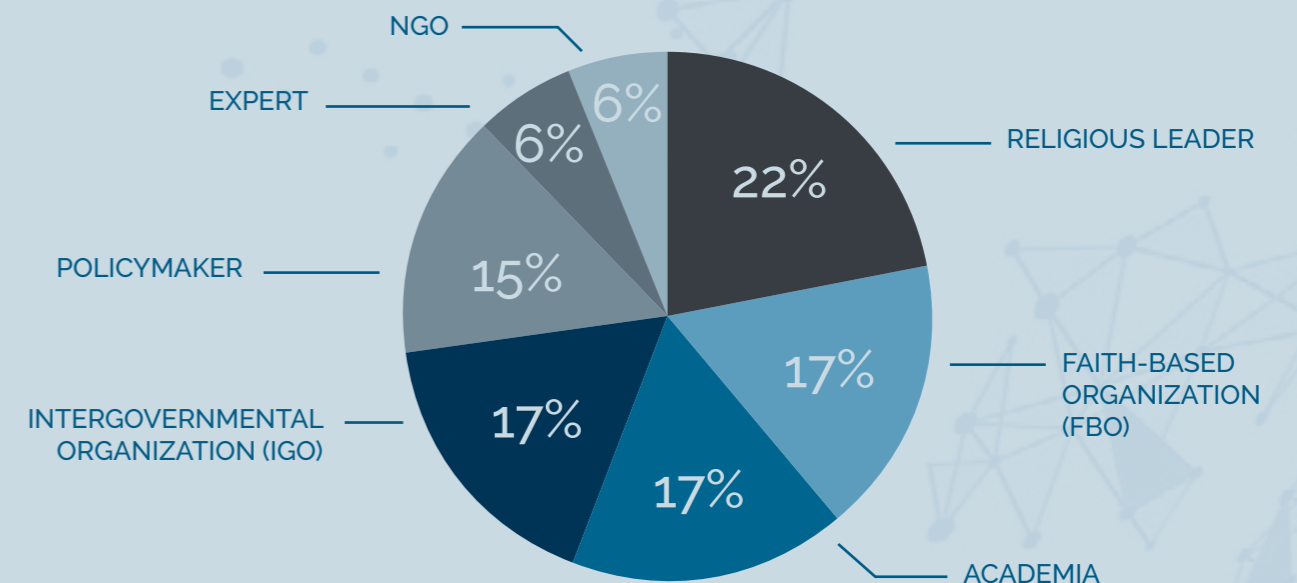
- **Shaping New Frontiers** by adopting long-term and bold strategies to share benefits of innovation, digitalisation, and technological advancement.

2020 Key statistics:

Between 13-17 October, 2020, **MORE THAN 2000 PARTICIPANTS** from **90 COUNTRIES** attended the first-ever virtual Forum. **28%** of participants joined from the KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA, **14%** of participants joined from AUSTRIA and **12%** of participants joined from the USA.

The Forum included **18 SESSIONS** (including plenaries and panel sessions) over a series of five days. It welcomed interventions from **147 SPEAKERS** representing **47 COUNTRIES** and **MORE THAN 10 RELIGIONS**.

— INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION OF SPEAKERS —



//Regional Consultations



NORTH AMERICA:

Focus on refugees and forced migration, COVID-19 and anti-racism



EUROPE:

Focus on fostering gender equality, safeguarding the planet, sharing benefits of innovation and technological advancement to counter hate speech and protect sacred sites



ASIA:

Focus on gender and structural equality, good governance and environmental protection



ARAB REGION:

Focus on hate speech, discrimination and environmental protection



AFRICA:

Focus on food insecurity, COVID-19, economic crises and environmental protection



LATIN AMERICA:

Focus on good governance, climate change, COVID-19 and socio-economic issues

WHY IS an interfaith voice important for the G20?



MORE THAN 80% of the world's population identifies with a religious or spiritual tradition. Faith traditions mobilise communities and tap into our **common values of care for people and the planet.**

THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS include a demanding set of **169 TARGETS** which require global partnerships to be achieved. Religious actors engage on each and every goal and target.

SIX REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS PRECEDED THE G20 INTERFAITH FORUM



- **AFRICA:** 14 countries represented
- **ARAB REGION:** 14 countries represented
- **ASIA:** 18 countries represented
- **EUROPE:** 25 countries represented
- **LATIN AMERICA:** 25 countries represented
- **NORTH AMERICA:** USA and Canada

For the first time, the G20 Interfaith Forum also heard from young Leaders at a dedicated Youth Consultation, and from KAICIID's Fellows, who provided recommendations from the field of interfaith dialogue to the process.

G20 INTERFAITH PARTNERS

The G20 Interfaith was held in global cooperation between KAICIID, the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC), the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, and Saudi Arabia's National Dialogue Committee.



The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) is an inter-governmental organization that promotes dialogue to build peace in conflict areas. It does this by enhancing understanding and cooperation between people of different cultures and followers of different religions. The Centre was founded by Austria, Saudi Arabia and Spain. The Holy See is the Founding Observer. Its Board of Directors comprises prominent representatives from five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism). The Board designs and supervises the Centre's programmes.

<https://www.kaiciid.org/>



The G20 Interfaith Forum Association offers an annual platform where a network of religiously linked institutions and initiatives engage on global agendas (primarily and including the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs). The annual G20 Summits are a critical time and place where priority global issues are considered. The goal is to contribute meaningful insight and recommendations that respond to and help shape the G20 and thus global policy agendas. The G20 Interfaith Forum builds on the vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting their rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values. These include interfaith and intercultural organizations, religious leaders, scholars, development and humanitarian entities, and business and civil society actors.

<https://www.g20interfaith.org/>



Established in 2005, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is mandated by the UN to improve relations between societies and communities of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Through its various programmes and activities around the world, UNAOC works to foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions, and polarization.

<https://www.unaoc.org/>



The National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue is a government entity in Saudi Arabia that was established in 2016. Its mandate includes planning and designing programmes that aim at enhancing the Kingdom's initiatives for interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Members of the committee include representatives from various government ministries and dialogue institutions based both in Saudi Arabia and around the world.



RECOMMENDATIONS





The G20 Interfaith Forum recommends that the G20 Summit support more active collaboration between public and religious institutions with an urgent focus on the following five areas:

// ADDRESSING COVID-19 EMERGENCIES

1. Engage religious communities systematically on anti-COVID vaccine development, messaging, and distribution
2. Act with religious communities in meeting urgent needs of especially vulnerable communities, including refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), scapegoated communities, and women and children
3. Collaborate with religious communities in mobilising, implementing, and assuring accountability for adequate financial packages, including appropriate national debt relief

// ADVANCING PEACE AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS

1. Collaborate with religious communities to advance a global ceasefire and pursue specific peacemaking actions
2. Pursue agreed initiatives under the February 2019 **Human Fraternity framework**
3. Collaborate in addressing hate speech and associated violence
4. Strengthen collaborative measures to advance action on refugee and IDP populations
5. Act urgently to protect sacred sites and religious and cultural heritage

// EMPOWERING PEOPLE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS THAT PROMOTE EDUCATION, OPPOSE CORRUPTION, EMPOWER WOMEN AND REDUCE STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY AND RACISM

1. Collaborative action to advance urgent inclusive education reforms
2. Strengthen common platforms supporting anti-corruption
3. Pursue multi-stakeholder action on human trafficking
4. Collaborate to translate commitments to women's equality and youth engagement into concrete action plans
5. Collaborate with religious communities to combat structural inequality and racism

// TAKING COMMON ACTION TO PROTECT THE PLANET

1. Support rainforest initiatives
2. Action in support of the **Paris Climate Change agreement**

// ENHANCING AND ELABORATING RELIGION-PUBLIC SECTOR SYNERGIES

1. Designate the G20 Interfaith Forum as an Official Engagement Group in future G20 Processes
2. G20 support for efforts to link broader human rights efforts to action to address violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

PRIORITY ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A

Recommendations directly
linked to the COVID-19 emergencies

// VACCINES.

In the urgent matter of developing, testing, and distributing anti-COVID-19 vaccines, religious leaders have unparalleled access both to priority communities and to those who need persuasion and support to comply.

// PUBLIC HEALTH COLLABORATION.

Active engagement by religious actors with international and national public health authorities on vaccine and prevention and treatment efforts that specifically address the COVID-19 health crisis bears note and should be pursued and expanded. Areas for priority action include effective public health messages and countering misinformation, identifying issues affecting specific communities, priority health supplies, and decisions on lockdowns and reopening.

// VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES.

Religious communities have mobilised as multifaith and in collaboration with different communities in response to the COVID-19 emergencies, with a particular focus on special vulnerabilities and communities in need. Active religious engagement with refugee and IDP communities is an example, as is support to children, women, people with disabilities, and others. Religious insights and support should be an integral part of humanitarian strategies and practical support responding to the COVID-19 emergencies.

// FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND STIMULUS PACKAGES.

In meeting the urgent needs of countries and communities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, governments should ensure engagement of religious communities in planning, implementation, resource mobilisation and accountability mechanisms stimulus packages and relief measures. This includes specific arrangements for appropriate national debt relief. The G20 Interfaith Forum is collaborating with multi-religious alliances in support of global action to meet these needs. Religious institutions can support efforts to address COVID-19 related hate speech, exclusion, discrimination, and violence.

B

Recommendations aimed at advancing peace and resolving conflicts

// GLOBAL CEASEFIRE.

G20 members should collaborate with religious communities to advance the global ceasefire recommended by the United Nations Secretary General. They should pursue energetically specific peacemaking activities, for example by the African Union. The G20, alongside other transnational bodies, needs to recognise in more deliberate ways religious roles in peacebuilding work and to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity by promoting the participation of faith communities and religious institutions in regional and local conflict and reconciliation efforts.

// INTERRELIGIOUS INITIATIVES FOR PEACE AND ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

The G20 should build on historic efforts to advance common values and interreligious harmony, exemplified in the February 2019 **Human Fraternity framework**. The G20 should note and support resulting initiatives.

// COUNTERING HATE SPEECH.

The G20 should explicitly address the urgent need to tackle growing hate speech and incitement to violence, in collaboration with religious bodies including KAICIID and multilateral measures. This

includes activating inclusive institutional channels for cooperation between states, institutions and religious leaders to promote social cohesion and counter hate speech.

// SACRED SITES AND RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE.

The G20 should support initiatives to protect sacred sites, especially where they are threatened, with active involvement of religious communities. More broadly initiatives to recognise and support measures to build on religious and cultural heritage as a pivotal element in action on sustainable development deserve explicit G20 support.

// PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES, G20 MEMBERS, DEVELOPMENT FINANCE ORGANIZATIONS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (INCLUDING FAITH COMMUNITIES), SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED AS A PRIORITY.

Legal frameworks to ensure protection of refugees, in collaboration with faith organizations, are a priority area for collaboration and action. (see Policy Brief: Addressing Refugees and Forced Migration) Partnerships with religious communities should be fostered to meet the urgent needs of especially vulnerable communities, including refugees and IDPs, scapegoated communities, and women and children.

C

Recommendations on empowering people through development agendas that promote education, oppose corruption, empower women and reduce structural inequality and racism

// COLLABORATIVE ACTION TO ADVANCE URGENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REFORMS.

The G20 should highlight the priority of education reforms that address digital divides highlighted by the COVID-19 emergencies, challenges to universal access to education, and longer term needs to

engage intercultural and interreligious dimensions in teaching on civic values and express support for social cohesion. An important step would be G20 specific support for inclusive education. Access to technology needs to be guaranteed as a precursor to access to education, particularly in the current scenario, where there has been a massive shift to virtual platforms. Interreligious education is key to combat prejudice and hatred and faith actors need to be heard.

// STRENGTHEN COMMON PLATFORMS SUPPORTING ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTION, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS.

The G20 should affirm its commitment to strategic support to fighting corruption and impunity and strengthening accountability, in collaboration with appropriate religious actors.

// PURSUE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ACTION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

The G20 should affirm its commitment to promising alliances including religious leaders and communities committed to work to end human trafficking and modern forms of slavery.

// COLLABORATE TO TRANSLATE COMMITMENTS TO WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INTO CONCRETE ACTION PLANS.

The G20 should reaffirm commitments to the empowerment of women and youth in formal policies and institutions, with support through multi-religious collaboration working with state actors and civil society.

// COLLABORATE WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES ON DEVELOPING LONGER TERM ACTION PLANS TO COMBAT STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY AND RACISM.

The G20 should recognise religious roles in addressing critical global challenges of inequality and racism and commit to common efforts looking ahead.

D

Recommendations regarding common action to protect the planet

G20 commitments of support to the Paris Climate Change agreement, recognising the importance of partnerships with religious institutions and leaders in both advocacy and action. Policy-makers and religious institutions should include environmental education in religious curricula and provide institutional support for training religious leaders on the centrality of protection of the planet in their education.

// G20 SUPPORT FOR INTERFAITH RAINFOREST INITIATIVES

The G20 should support the promising initiatives of interreligious alliances working with indigenous communities to protect priority biomes including rainforests.

E

Recommendations to enhance and elaborate religion-public sector synergies

// THE G20 SHOULD SUPPORT THE DESIGNATION OF THE G20 INTERFAITH FORUM AS AN OFFICIAL ENGAGEMENT GROUP IN FUTURE G20 PROCESSES.

The G20 Interfaith Forum has earned a place as an official engagement group in forthcoming G20

processes. Worldwide, religious communities engage actively on global agendas and policymakers can benefit from their insights and recommended actions. Collaborative engagement of religious communities offers significant advantages including transnational links, holistic visions, amplifying voices of vulnerable communities. The G20 Interfaith Forum has provided an important platform for gathering key leaders since 2014. Its work has supported elaboration of priority recommendations and insights from the broader world of interfaith communities, with substantive policy recommendations addressed to G20 leaders. This aims to mobilise support for and implementation of global policy initiatives. The Forum provides an important setting where relationships between public policymakers and religious communities can be identified and built.

// G20 SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO LINK BROADER HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS TO ACTION TO ADDRESS VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF.

With worrying evidence of rising violations of human rights with special reference to religious minority communities, the G20 should commit itself to addressing the issues in collaboration with the G20 Interfaith Forum.



Cochran Oisi

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS PROPOSED IN POLICY BRIEFS

The COVID-19 Pandemic

// PRIORITY AREAS FOR G20 ACTION:

Engaging religious communities in the multi-stakeholder and multinational strategic reflection on anti-COVID vaccines, and on directing support to the most vulnerable communities.

but not always recognised. Pertinent lessons about significant religious roles from previous pandemics (HIV/AIDS, Ebola) and from the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic argue for proactive consideration and action that can strengthen pandemic response.

// RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (POLICY BRIEF: RELIGIOUS ROLES IN ADDRESSING THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY):

Religious communities are integrally linked to many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and broader economic/social crises, and their active engagement is crucial to effective responses to pandemic challenges. They are both deeply affected by these crises and are in multiple ways particularly effective in responding at the local, national and international levels. Attention to the minority of religious communities that have furthered divisions and spread misinformation is also important. These diverse faith community roles are sometimes

Framing and delivering public health messages have particular significance in the COVID-19 health crisis. International and national health authorities have engaged faith actors in delivering critical public health messages; WHO's appreciation for vital roles of religious leaders is reflected in outreach efforts and specific guidance directed to religious communities¹. Public health guidelines on gatherings, for example, often apply specifically to religious communities. These guidelines meet generally positive responses and compliance from religious groups, but also some opposition and resistance which religious communities are best placed to address and combat. Actual and potential action to counter misinformation is vital, whether religious actors are responsi-

¹ WHO, "Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19: Interim guidance," 7 April 2020. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19?>

ble and whether false and dangerous information is deliberate or inadvertent. Religious delivery of health care (integrated to varying degrees in health systems) as well as spiritual care play important roles. Broader religious roles and their potential for positive impact are frequently ignored, with distinctive assets and challenges not taken fully into account. Apart from missed opportunities, tensions can arise when religious dimensions are ignored or not folded into pandemic response.

Of special note is the common religious focus on mobilising urgent direct assistance to meet the social and economic needs of vulnerable communities, and advocacy that gives voice to the voiceless by pressing for action on and support to these communities at all levels. This applies to those directly affected by the COVID-19 disease, addressing health care and pastoral care needs, and the much larger numbers indirectly affected by economic shutdowns and other social repercussions. There, countless mostly local faith communities are mobilising support for food, shelter, and livelihoods. Despite notable mobilisation of volunteers and financial resources, religious community efforts to protect and support vulnerable communities suffer from weak coordination with, and limited support from, the public health sector and other efforts. The efforts overall are far more fragmented and less effective than they could be if stronger collaboration mechanisms were in place.

Social tensions linked to the COVID-19 emergency often involve religious communities, including the scapegoating of specific, often minority, groups. Of great concern are domestic violence and abuse of children, which have in-

Religious leaders and communities will play crucial roles in the next phases of the COVID-19 crisis

creased during the crisis. These forms of abuse call for swift and immediate action, including response and action from religious communities. Thus, religious actors can and must be part of efforts at all levels to address such domestic tensions in their community. These efforts should be combined with continuing active religious involvement in broader promotion of social cohesion through education and leadership, including addressing hate speech which has expanded with the pandemic.

Looking ahead, religious leaders and communities will play crucial roles in the next phases of the COVID-19 crisis. These will include essential contributions to the success of vaccine programs, not only in practical aspects of testing, distribution, and monitoring of measures to introduce vaccination against COVID-19, but also through partnering with the scientific and public health communities in earning confidence and trust from local communities. Additional crucial roles include addressing health disparities, fortifying primary health care systems, and identifying and supporting vulnerable communities in the continuing so-

cio-economic crises. The potential contributions of faith communities in conflict prevention and resolution, and in peacebuilding, will be essential in addressing social tensions, not only in fragile and conflict zones, but throughout societies where the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a bright light on wide inequalities and injustice.

Analysis of the essential assets and the distinctive roles and needs of religious communities in relation to the global COVID-19 response underscores how crucial expanded engagement with religious communities will be. Specific areas where the G20 should give urgent and priority attention include:

- (I) Increasing the effectiveness of pandemic and epidemic responses through primary health care delivery; supporting direct service provision through religious health infrastructure and personnel, and community engagement, especially in Africa and with particular attention to children.
- (II) Utilising more proactively the significant capacity and comparative advantage of religious communities in delivering critical public health messages, including guidance in adapting messages fit for local contexts and addressing sensitive topics (burial practices, for example).
- (III) Building on active roles in addressing misinformation, inadvertent and deliberate, linked to religious communities;

- (IV) Drawing on capacities to address emerging issues of mental health and needs for trauma healing;
- (V) Bolstering capacities to bring in and work more effectively with rule breakers and their followers (for example religious communities resisting public health guidelines), recognising both responsibilities and opportunities.
- (VI) Supporting religious communities in rapid and effective innovations and adaptations of practices and services that address critical new needs and reduce tensions, and offering support and insight on resilience and delivery of innovations.
- (VII) Consistent support for human rights including Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), with particular attention to easing tensions involving state/religion relationships arising from public health restrictions.
- (VIII) Engaging with religious experience and capacity in addressing social protection priorities, including critical food security and social protection needs (e.g food banks, providing PPE supplies, support to vulnerable communities).

Since successful vaccine implementation is crucial to control of the pandemic, the G20 Summit can and must engage religious actors in the critical issues around development

(including testing), production, and equitable and ethics-driven distribution of vaccines. Religious actors should be purposefully included in accountability mechanisms, including assurance of priority to vulnerable communities and corruption-proofing relief funds. Listening to and acting on needs of the voiceless merit top

priority in actions on COVID response.

The vital religious community interests in and energetic mobilisation to address the COVID-19 crises highlights the need for explicit consultation and engagement mechanisms for faith communities within the G20 system.

Advancing Peace and Resolving Conflicts

// PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE G20:

Focus on common efforts to address hate speech and associated violence, on action to address the forced migration challenge and on creative integration of the protection of sacred sites into broader sustainable development objectives.

// RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (POLICY BRIEF: COUNTERING HATE SPEECH: ROLES OF RELIGION AND CULTURE)

Participants at the G20 Interfaith Forum underscored three vital challenges to more effective collaboration and action to counter hate speech: (1) The lack of universally applicable and agreed definitions (legal and otherwise) of hate speech within the international and national policy communities. This is due to dif-

fering understandings of what constitutes hate speech, as well as the proper balance between reducing harmful communication and the right to freedom of speech. There are often difficult dividing lines between speech that is hurtful and speech which amounts to incitement to violence. (2) Weak coordination among multiple policy approaches and entities that detract from the effectiveness of response. (3) Disconnects between public and private roles (including religious institutions) in strategies to address the rise and increasing reach of social media in spreading dangerous hate speech from privately-owned technology platforms. Initiatives by social media companies seek to address the problem but are insufficient. In short, action to address hate speech is hampered by the lack of effective systems of governance at many levels.

Forum participants highlighted both the need

for action and but also sensitivities which include weak international consensus on appropriate responses. Multi-sector collaboration to counter dangerous speech with positive messages alongside firm action to address speech amounting to incitement are both vital, and they should engage religious communities in purposeful ways. Multisector approaches should build on strong collaboration with the United Nations and expanded outreach to private companies.

Religious communities themselves have responsibilities to take proactive responses, especially to counter negative trends within their communities. This should be grounded in multisector dialogue, including a priority focus on school systems. In education, enhancing programs to strengthen social cohesion and to assure media literacy need to include interfaith understandings. Bold action to identify and act on dangerous speech is vital, including with anti-discrimination legislation that is seen clearly to apply to all citizens, irrespective of their religion, race, belief or creed.

Five specific areas for action by religious communities were identified:

1. advocacy for rules and legislation that prevent discrimination,
2. advocacy for policies that provide redress and support for those who have been affected by hate speech,
3. partnerships with governments in the identification of hate speech especially where it may lead to incitement to violence;

4. promoting values such as tolerance, non-discrimination, pluralism and freedom of expression and opinion; and
5. strengthening interfaith, intercultural and intra-religious dialogue focused on nuanced and deeper understanding of other faiths and religions as a preventive approach.

Action to increase support for formal and non-formal education to implement United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 is important, including digital literacy initiatives that promote human rights, respect and knowledge of "the Other," and an accurate and nuanced understanding of one's own, and others', beliefs through reflective learning.

It is thus important that the G20 and other multilateral bodies recognise the vital roles that cooperation with religious communities can play in the active fight against hate speech, respecting freedom of expression and working in the context set by national and international law. Tools include new technologies alongside more traditional means such as sermons, teaching, public statements, etc., that work purposefully to disseminate adequate information about other religions; conveying messages of respect for the beliefs and morals of others; making joint public statements which unambiguously condemn episodes of religious hatred or violence; transmitting specific doctrines that highlight the need to avoid violence and to search for ways of peaceful and harmonious living together; discrediting explicitly the position and messages of hate speakers; and/or obtaining information about hate speakers. These offer promising ways to address hate speech on online platforms, in partnership with private sector

entities, faith actors, and civil society, including through aligning, sharpening and harmonising definitions and policies on hate speech across platforms and through the removal of content that incites violence against communities, or that promotes the legitimisation of violent acts against people or communities.

// RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (POLICY BRIEF: ADDRESSING REFUGEES AND FORCED MIGRATION)

The Saudi G20 Presidency has identified refugees, migrants, and trafficking in its goal to “empower people by unleashing opportunities for all, including in particular empowering women and youth.” The G20 Summit offers a crucial venue to coordinate and advance responses for refugees and IDPs, who are primarily hosted in communities of low- or middle-income countries.² With the COVID-19 emergency heightening burdens on both forced migrants and host governments, urgent financial and human needs demand action.

Action on refugees and forced migration issues is central to the priority objectives of respecting human dignity, ending conflict, and promoting sustainable economic and social development. The many aspects of forced migration call for purposeful measures from global leaders, as the present situation causes great human suffering and uncertainty and places severe economic, political, and social stresses on, especially, refugee-host states. The number of forced migrants worldwide is at historic highs and is growing: at the end of

Action on refugees and forced migration issues is central to the priority objectives of respecting human dignity, ending conflict, and promoting sustainable economic and social development.

2019, an estimated 79.5 million people were refugees and IDPs. The global COVID-19 pandemic and associated emergency further strain both refugees and the communities that host them. Dangerous and significant spillover effects worldwide are anticipated.

Religious institutions, including faith-based operational organizations, play substantial roles in direct support to forced migrants at all stages (advocacy, conflict resolution, service provision, resettlement) and places (conflict zones, host countries). The core values of religious communities involve compelling and unifying calls to compassion and hospitality. Deeper collaboration among religious institutions and faith-inspired organizations, G20 members governments, and those present and working in refugee-hosting communities can foster the types of “tools, partnerships, and funding” needed to implement UNHCR’s Com-

² “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019,” UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>

prehensive Refugee Response Framework and the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees. Religious actors bring to the table as a leading concern the imperative of action to protect children in forced migration settings. Religious communities act as transnational actors able to provide services and advocacy across borders.

G20 leaders should engage with religious communities and organizations in a common effort to advance, in short order and respecting the dignity of those involved, the three durable solutions for refugees and forced migrants: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Specific recommendations highlight the need for cooperation with faith communities on critical needs linked to the COVID-19 crisis. These include food security and health care, security and safety and education as priorities. Action requires establishing effective coordination mechanisms with faith communities at appropriate levels, and addressing dangerous migration routes through constructive programs.

// RECOMMENDED ACTION ON SACRED SITES AND RELIGIOUS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Religious cultural heritage is emerging as a new engagement point not only for advancing peace but also for reaching the SDGs. This adds an important dimension to ongoing work on protecting sacred sites. New thinking points to ways that protecting and cultivating religious cultural heritage can advance many SDGs—for example, by having

significant positive impacts on sustainable growth, on key peace and justice institutions, on sustainable cities and communities, on environmental protection and on strengthening key partnerships. This presents an opportunity to build on the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites, which was spearheaded by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) last year, while linking this initiative to broader efforts to connect religious cultural heritage efforts with the SDG agenda.

Sacred sites serve as a meeting point for developing of dialogical civic spaces and an area for exchange in the religious and cultural spheres. At the same time, work in this area has become more complex because shared and contested sites have been weaponised as focal points of acts of religious or ethnic hatred and of state-sponsored geopolitical agendas. Further, sacred places have multiple identities as sites, both of living religious activity and of cultural heritage and memory. Last, but not least, there is an interdependence between religious cultural heritage and environmental protection. This raises a number of challenges of how to manage the complex custodianship relationships of religious associations and heritage authorities without infringing upon religious autonomy and freedom of religion or belief on the one hand, and wider civic and cultural expectations to advance the SDGs.

Urgent action is required by G20 leaders (1) to develop policy spaces for the preservation of religious cultural heritage as a means to the building of dialogical and inclusive civic spaces, while addressing valid stakeholder

concerns; (2) to link religious cultural heritage initiatives that best further Agenda 2030 with the implementation of human rights responsibilities and with security concerns associated with safeguarding sacred sites; and (3) to take advantage of the UNAOC Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites as an opportunity

to consolidate emerging efforts of other international and national initiatives for preservation of religious cultural heritage and to link these with concrete sustainable development policies, thereby integrating the Plan of Action into the broader deskbook of G20 governments' policy formation.

Empowering People through Development Agendas that Promote Education, Oppose Corruption, Empower Women and Reduce Structural Inequality and Racism

// PRIORITY ACTIONS BY G20:

Action to advance inclusive education, reaffirm commitments on fighting corruption, and action on human trafficking.

// RECOMMENDED ACTION: (POLICY BRIEF: INTERFAITH APPROACH TO ADVANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION)

The 2020 G20 Presidency Agenda calls on G20 leaders to "empower people, pave the way for a better future for all." The G20's 2020 theme, Realizing Opportunities of the 21st Century for All, is supported by a global consensus that inclusive education should be a core policy prior-

ity. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed ever-widening gaps in most societies where disadvantaged populations find themselves further marginalised during the crisis. This situation reinforces an urgent call for G20 leaders to review their national educational policies so as to support the goal that everyone in the society can realise their potential and thrive, in particular the most vulnerable children and young people, through inclusive and caring education.

Inclusive education is widely accepted as an ideal, central to proven social goals for educational systems. It offers paths to enhancing students' motivation for participation and learning, raising self- and other-aware-

ness, reducing bias and stereotypes, enriching friendships with peers and relationships with others, increasing capabilities in teamwork, collaboration and conflict transformation, enabling a greater sense of belonging and community, reducing bullying and violence, and most importantly, improving wellbeing and opportunities for all. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates, widening gaps separate ideals and practices pertaining to quality and equality in education. Without inclusive and caring approaches, vulnerable children and young people are not only discriminated against within the current systems, they are also excluded from broader opportunities for learning and wellbeing.

Globally, during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, faith-inspired initiatives have played distinctive roles in advancing a values-based discourse and promoting spiritually meaningful approaches to respecting all children's dignity and meeting their diverse needs. Faith/interfaith communities' involvement in supporting the most vulnerable invites governments and global partners to consider how to ensure the rights of all children and young people to education, and actively create conditions and environments, both online and face-to-face, which reach out to those at the margin. Faith-inspired educational initiatives are working in many settings to empower local communities to close the gaps resulted from school closures, lack of public services, and isolation. They also provide practical support to address the acute social, emotional and spiritual needs of children during this time. By engaging with religious leaders and faith/interfaith actors, G20

leaders, national governments, and their international partners can strengthen the 2020 G20's vision of "global cooperation to forge mutually beneficial solutions, face challenges, and create opportunities for all".

// RECOMMENDED ACTION (POLICY BRIEF: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN COVID-19 EMERGENCIES)

Trust and accountability are vital to address the COVID-19 emergencies, for governments, religious actors, civil society leaders and businesses. Imperative steps include preemptive action to assure open and honest use of funds mobilised to support health interventions and to provide urgent services to vulnerable populations. G20 leaders, religious institutions and communities can, and should, take concrete and transparent steps to this end.

The G20 Interfaith Forum has highlighted the importance of engaging religious actors purposefully in global anti-corruption alliances over several years, but the COVID-19 emergencies lend special urgency to the task. The 2019 Forum recommendations to G20 leaders urged that governance be a central theme of the 2020 G20 Summit, with specific commitments to continuing action to combat corruption and poor governance and to increase transparency, accountability and protection for whistleblowers, and to facilitate the return of stolen assets. This should involve partnerships to broaden tools and coalitions that address corruption and reinforce values of integrity at the community, national and global levels.

Corruption takes different forms in different settings, but it fuels anger and cynicism everywhere. It undermines efforts to advance on virtually any front, including mobilising emergency responses to a pandemic, fighting poverty, addressing education priorities, acting on climate change and supporting those who are most vulnerable. Fighting corruption thus belongs at the center of global policy agendas.

Religious actors can be powerful allies in the effort but are insufficiently involved. They can pinpoint and document the daily corrosive effects of corruption on poor communities and, individually and collectively, build on shared ethical teachings to bolster effective action. In contrast, their silence and acquiescence can abet corrupt actors, public and private. Religious actors need to be an integral part of addressing corrupt practices within their own communities. They can contribute to efforts to address corruption on community, national and global agendas. Among priority areas for action are reinforcing values of integrity through religious and religiously provided education and forming strong partnerships with various integrity alliances.

The G20 Interfaith Forum in October 2020, highlighted the importance of governance issues across the full agenda as they affect prospects for health, peace, human development and protection of the planet. G20 leaders need to heed the insights of religious communities and commit to continuing engagement with broad civil society and private networks that include religious actors, as they act decisively to rebuild trust and integrity in governance and

public services. A forthright focus on meaningful partnerships to fight corruption is an essential part of the goal.

With trust a central issue in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, three imperatives merit urgent attention: (a) assuring full transparency in development of vaccines and therapies, including on finance; (b) assurance of "corruption proofing" of funds mobilised for health services and to serve vulnerable populations; and (c) concerted efforts to address misinformation and hate speech.

// RECOMMENDED ACTION (POLICY BRIEF: MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING)

The COVID-19 pandemic amplifies the urgent need for G20 leaders to combat modern slavery on a local, national and international scale. Now, more than ever, countries need to develop, expand and enforce comprehensive anti-trafficking measures while also assisting and protecting victims. At the same time, they must address the underlying economic and social causes of human trafficking. Such measures should be integral elements of the 2020 G20 Presidency Agenda that calls on its G20 members to "promote the equality of opportunities, especially for underserved groups," including "encouraging equality jobs and social protection."³

Of the estimated over 40 million people subjected to modern slavery (in every world re-

³ "Saudi Arabia's G20 Presidency Agenda: Empowering People," December 2019, <https://g20.org/en/Documents/Empowering%20People.pdf>.
⁴ <https://t20saudiArabia.org.sa/en/Communique/Pages/default.aspx>

gion), 25 million are victims of forced labor and 15 million of forced marriage. Global demand for cheap goods and commercial sex fuels illegal trafficking rings, impeding economic growth for law-abiding businesses and curtailing legitimate employment opportunities for millions of people. Poverty, armed conflict, poor access to education and legal employment and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis all heighten the risks that traffickers will target the vulnerable. Strong multilateral commitments promise action to address the issue, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7, which calls for the eradication of modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030. Numerous challenges, however, remain to dismantle the economic, political,

and social structures that allow modern slavery to flourish.

Religious leaders and faith organizations of different kinds are among the most prominent voices today speaking out against slavery and trafficking. With their ability to speak to the moral stakes of the issue and to collaborate across political, cultural, and geographic lines, faith actors are well-positioned to shape societal attitudes toward trafficking, contribute to prevention efforts, and provide psychosocial, financial, and legal assistance to victims. By exchanging resources and expertise with faith actors, G20 countries can strengthen national and international responses to combat modern slavery.

Common Action to Protect the Planet

// PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR G20:

Reaffirm support to the Paris Climate agreement and support interreligious rainforest initiatives.

// RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (POLICY BRIEF: INTERFAITH ACTION TO PROTECT RAINFORESTS)

The COVID-19 crisis highlights the urgent need for G20 leaders to support and pro-

tect tropical rainforests. Destruction of these forests poses an existential threat to the future global climate: deforestation results in emission of billions of tons of carbon dioxide each year, exacerbates the effects of global climate change, threatens the livelihoods of indigenous communities, and contributes to the spread of animal-borne infectious diseases such as COVID-19.

G20 members and religious authorities have

Preserving intact rainforests and restoring degraded land are essential to curbing the long-term damage of deforestation.

the potential to enhance awareness and spur action on tropical rainforests. Faith-linked initiatives such as the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) play pivotal roles in directing global attention to the challenges facing the world's rainforests and in empowering local communities to pursue sustainable solutions.

Preserving intact rainforests and restoring degraded land are essential to curbing the long-term damage of deforestation. G20 countries should promote measures to protect forests and peatlands rather than allocate them for commercial use, and support efforts to rehabilitate degraded ecosystems. New approaches within agricultural industries are likewise essential to reverse the damage caused by deforestation. G20 lead-

ers can take decisive action by withdrawing support for subsidies to industries that rely on deforestation.

Indigenous populations are disproportionately affected by tropical deforestation. G20 rainforest countries take concrete actions to uphold customary land rights and recognise indigenous claims to their ancestral lands, and support community-based monitoring systems that report human rights violations and provide legal assistance to indigenous communities. G20 leaders should ensure that indigenous voices are included in policymaking processes at all levels.

G20 leaders should use their influence to press for greater transparency for the environmental and human rights impact of commercial industries. Support for independent third-party verification mechanisms to regulate company supply chains and address potential violations is one promising approach. G20 governments should endorse national initiatives to reduce consumption of meat and dairy sourced from deforested land.

G20 leaders should fund research to better understand the impact of deforestation on the spread of viruses; rainforest countries in particular should act quickly to promote land protection efforts that reduce risks of disease transmission from animals to humans. G20 countries and organizations such as the UN and WWF should continue to work closely with faith actors on issues of deforestation and conservation, collaborating with them in policymaking discussions and project implementation.

Enhancing and Elaborating Religion-Public Sector Synergies

// PRIORITY ACTION FOR G20:

Designate the G20 Interfaith Forum as an Official Engagement Group in future G20 Processes

// RECOMMENDED ACTION (FROM THE 2020 T20 COMMUNIQUE)⁴

There is an urgent need to better recognise and integrate the significant involvement of faith-based actors in development initiatives through effective policy-driven responses. These responses require novel and inventive engagement strategies, and the development of a coordinated effort. Faith-based networks should be steered toward a more systemic and comprehensive commitment to sustainable development, in the context of G20 priorities. This will make this engagement more relevant to G20

processes and translate across and convey more effectively the G20 governments' commitments.

It will also gather greater support for their implementation and address the present challenges in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is particularly relevant to the pursuit of innovative responses to the challenges of the pandemic and the need for wider grassroots networks to support policy implementation. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the G20 process to benefit from and develop an evidence-based understanding of the impact of religion on policy further and interact more effectively with emerging faith-based policy-oriented networks. It also provides new ways to engage with both the challenges and opportunities presented by the emerging geopolitical roles of religious actors.



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ANNEX A:

POLICY BRIEFS



RELIGIOUS ROLES IN ADDRESSING THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Challenges and a Call to Action

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES ARE INTEGRALLY LINKED TO THE MANY ASPECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND BROADER ECONOMIC/SOCIAL CRISES, AND THEIR ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IS CRUCIAL TO ADDRESSING THE PANDEMIC CHALLENGES.

Religious communities are both deeply affected by these crises and are in multiple ways particularly effective in responding at local, national and international levels. Attention to the minority of religious communities who have furthered divisions and spread misinformation is also important. These diverse faith community roles are sometimes but not always recognised. Pertinent lessons from previous pandemics (HIV/AIDS, Ebola) as well as from the early stages of COVID-19 on the significance of religious roles argue for proactive consideration and action that can strengthen pandemic response.

Framing and delivering public health messages have particular significance in the COVID-19

health crisis. International and national health authorities have engaged faith actors in delivering critical public health messages; WHO's appreciation for vital roles of religious leaders is reflected in outreach efforts and specific guidance directed to religious communities¹. Public health guidelines on gatherings, for example, often apply specifically to religious communities. These guidelines meet generally positive responses and compliance from religious groups, but also some opposition and resistance which religious communities are best placed to address. Actual and potential action to counter misinformation is vital, whether religious actors are responsible and whether false and dangerous information is deliberate or inadvertent. Religious delivery of health care (integrated to varying degrees in health systems) as well as spiritual care play important roles. Broader religious roles and their potential for positive impact are frequently ignored, with distinctive assets and challenges not taken fully into account. Apart from missed opportunities, tensions can arise when religious dimensions are ignored.

¹ WHO, "Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19: Interim guidance," 7 April 2020. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnqH7BRDdARIsACTSAdvbWbtz7NEKXHF-2rJAO29FEF1L_w3NiNoMZ-IFcjTxvAQsCwiu1saAgllEALw_wcB

Of special note is the common religious focus on mobilising urgent direct assistance to meet the social and economic needs of vulnerable communities, and advocacy that gives voice to the voiceless by pressing for action on and support to these communities at all levels. This applies both to those directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing health care and pastoral care needs, and the much larger numbers indirectly affected by economic shutdowns and other social repercussions. There, countless mostly local faith communities are mobilising support for food, shelter, and livelihoods. Despite notable mobilisation of volunteers and financial resources, religious community efforts to protect and support vulnerable communities suffer from weak coordination with, and limited support from, public health and other efforts, so that efforts overall are far more fragmented and less effective than could readily be possible.

Social tensions linked to the COVID-19 emergency often involve religious communities, including scapegoating of specific groups. Of great concern are domestic violence and abuse of children, both increasing during the crisis, that call for action including by religious communities. Thus, religious actors can and must be part of efforts at all levels to address such tensions. These efforts should be combined with continuing active religious involvement in broader promotion of social cohesion through education and leadership, including addressing hate speech which has expanded with the pandemic.

Looking ahead, religious leaders and communities will play crucial roles in the next phases of the COVID-19 crisis. These will in-

clude essential contributions to the success of vaccine programs, not only in practical aspects of testing, distribution, and monitoring of measures to introduce vaccination against COVID-19, but also through partnering with the scientific and public health communities in earning confidence and trust from local communities. Additional crucial roles include addressing health disparities, fortifying primary health care systems, and identifying and supporting vulnerable communities in the continuing socio-economic crises. The potential contributions of faith communities in conflict prevention and resolution, and in peacebuilding, will be essential in addressing social tensions, not only in fragile and conflict zones, but throughout societies where COVID-19 has shone a bright light on wide inequalities and injustice.

Analysis of the essential assets and the distinctive roles and needs of religious communities in relation to the global COVID-19 response underscores how crucial expanded engagement with religious communities will be. Specific areas where the G20 should give urgent and priority attention include:

- (i) Increasing the effectiveness of pandemic and epidemic responses through primary health care delivery; supporting direct service provision through religious health infrastructure and personnel, and community engagement, especially in Africa and with sharp attention to children.
- (ii) Utilising more proactively the significant capacity and comparative

advantage of religious communities in delivering critical public health messages, including guidance in adapting messages to local contexts and addressing sensitive topics (burial practices, for example).

- (iii) Building on active roles in addressing misinformation, inadvertent and deliberate, linked to religious communities;
- (iv) Drawing on capacities to address emerging issues of mental health and trauma healing;
- (v) Bolstering capacities to bring in and work more effectively with rule breakers and their followers (for example religious communities resisting public health guidelines), recognising both responsibilities and opportunities.
- (vi) Supporting religious communities in rapid and effective innovations and adaptations of practices and services that address critical new needs and reduce tensions and offering support and insight on resilience and delivery of innovations.
- (vii) Consistent support for human rights including Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), with particular attention to easing tensions involving state/religion relationships arising from public health restrictions.

Social tensions linked to the COVID-19 emergency often involve religious communities

- (viii) Engaging with religious experience and capacity in addressing social protection priorities, including critical food security and social protection needs (e.g food banks, providing PPE supplies, support to vulnerable communities).

Since successful vaccine implementation is crucial to control of the pandemic, the G20 Summit can and must engage religious actors in the critical issues around development (including testing), production and equitable and ethics-driven distribution of vaccines. Religious actors should be purposefully included in accountability mechanisms, including assurance of priority to vulnerable communities and corruption-proofing relief funds. The voices of the voiceless merit top priority in actions on COVID-19 response.

The vital religious community interests in and energetic mobilisation to address the COVID-19 crises highlight the need for explicit consultation and engagement mechanisms for faith communities within the G20 system.

Issues and Opportunities

WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF WIDELY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES AND SITUATIONS, RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 EMERGENCIES TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS.

Monitoring and analysis of responses across world regions nonetheless suggests broad areas where positive engagement has contributed significantly as well as areas of actual or potential conflict that demand attentionⁱⁱ. These concern the leadership of global institutions, notably the G20, and religious communities themselves. Areas for reflection and action in relation to public health and related social protection imperatives include:

// ENGAGING RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES ON HEALTH MESSAGES AIMED AT APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR CHANGE.

Religious leaders have distinctive influence in public health messaging, especially in stress-filled settings requiring urgent pandemic responses and changes in traditional practices. Reviews of past faith contributions in health crisis situations identify large and distinctive

potential for positive impact in critical situations. This includes notably direct support for implementing health interventionsⁱⁱⁱ and effective messaging geared to awareness raising^{iv}, especially when sophisticated, subtle understandings and well adapted action are needed. Thus, religious communities can contribute to COVID-19 responses through fine-tuned messages that, in language and framing, reflect local contexts and set out practical options and priorities. Generic, globally designed messaging may not apply or resonate in specific contexts and cultures. Deep and continuing engagement between public health authorities and religious communities is needed to ensure that health messaging is well contextualised and enjoys authentic and deep understanding from faith communities so that they fully understand the issues and contribute actively to the design and implementation of solutions. As an example, messages that are linked to religious teachings, including stories and parables, use of music, and other creative efforts can greatly enhance national health programs.

Simply "using" religious leaders to pass on public health messages is insufficient and potential-

ly counterproductive. Thus broader, strategic engagement is important. Oversimplification and insensitive communication about COVID-19 risks and ways to address them can result in distorted information about critical topics that can also foment tensions. This applies with particular force during the COVID-19 pandemic, where adaptations to public health advice are essential as knowledge expands. Messaging is one important link among others in the complex causal chain through which people change attitudes and adopt altered practices. An over-emphasis on messaging or exclusive focus on this dimension often fails to achieve the behavior changes crucial to protecting lives. Reliance solely on religious leaders' sermons and other public statements (radio, TV, social media), for example, will fail to achieve the full potential benefits of religious engagement. This speaks to strategic and broad-based approaches to religious engagement that include attention to messaging capacities but also look to broader opportunities that include taking advantage of peer-to-peer influence among members of a faith community. Linking religious outreach with efforts to expand women's and youth leadership, especially in traditionally patriarchal religious structures, can yield important benefits.

// DEFINING, ADAPTING, AND TEMPERING PUBLIC HEALTH RESTRICTIONS.

Active dialogue between public health and

religious authorities is needed to identify and implement appropriate adaptations to religious practice that assure safety and prevent transmission but also reflect the needs of communities for pastoral care. Public health restrictions and guidance need to take into account the overall welfare of religious communities and their essential social roles. A concrete example is public health guidance on funeral and burial services during pandemic emergencies,^v where the response of communities that grieve and disruption of traditional and religious handling of death has particular importance. Restrictions on funeral gatherings and regulated handling of bodies have caused suffering in different countries and aggravated sorrow and stress for surviving families and communities. Rushed burials prompted by fears linked to the COVID-19 can erode trust in public health services, including causing people to hide ill and dying people for fear of being denied proper burial. The COVID-19 "infodemics" plus poorly adapted messaging can accentuate intra and interreligious prejudices (an example is the case of Sri Lanka and Muslim burial regulation).^{vi}

More broadly, public health guidance and regulations on mass gatherings and other religious practices are followed by most religious communities and actors who share general concerns for the safety of their communities. However, some communities contest regulations, sparking tensions. In many instances in very different societies,

ⁱⁱ See COVID-19 religious response project at <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/subprojects/religious-responses-to-covid-19>

ⁱⁱⁱ K.J. Lancaster, Carter-Edwards, L., Grilo, S., Shen, C. and Schoenthaler, A.M. (2014). Faith-based obesity programmes in blacks. *Obes Rev*, 15: 159-176. doi:10.1111/obr.12207; Hou, S., Cao, X. "A Systematic Review of Promising Strategies of Faith-Based Cancer Education and Lifestyle Interventions Among Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups." *J Canc Educ* 33, 1161-1175 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-017-1277-5>; Tristão Parra M, Porfírio GJM, Arredondo EM, Atallah AN. Physical Activity Interventions in Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2018;32(3):677-690. doi:10.1177/0890117116688107

^{iv} Elizabeth Costenbader et al., "Getting to Intent: Are Social Norms Influencing Intentions to Use Modern Contraception in the DRC?," *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 7 (July 16, 2019): e0219617. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0219617>

^v The WHO faith guidance includes a safe burials section: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19?gclid=CjwKCAjwvab7BRBAEiwAappqT08DFaoOotzCATSiaWMECAbVxoH7YeZ3PZT-v5HGoNXaZbfL1yXo4PRoCoBYQAvD_BwE

^{vi} "Anguish as Sri Lanka forces Muslims to cremate COVID-19 victims", *Aljazeera*, Apr 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/anguish-sri-lanka-forces-muslims-cremate-covid-19-victims-200403053706048.html>

standards and approaches applied to different types of gatherings and open facilities (shopping malls, liquor stores, sporting events, religious facilities) are not transparent or open to dialogue. This can contribute to frayed relationships between government authorities and religious communities. Appreciation for distinctive religious roles and assets, including pastoral care and community support, and transparency and consultation in the process of developing guidelines are vital needs.

// ROLES PLAYED BY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ADDRESSING SOCIAL TENSIONS AND VIOLENCE LINKED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RESPONSE, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO MISINFORMATION.

Spread of (mis)information is of significant concern in the COVID-19 and other pandemics. This includes misinterpretation of health messaging, the purposeful spread of rumors, and support for practices contrary to public health advice. Religious leaders have capabilities and responsibilities to support corrections of misinformation and to deal with outliers in communities that spread such misinformation, especially when it is dangerous. Of special concern is rising discrimination towards certain groups, including some religious communities that are identified with practices perceived as linked to spread of disease. Positive religious leadership can address the so-called "infodemic" in significant ways, even as neglect or hostilities can make the situation worse.

// APPLYING AND EXPANDING INNOVATIONS IN COMMUNICATION APPROACHES IN MANY FAITH COMMUNITIES PROPELLED BY THE PANDEMIC SHUTDOWNS; NEED TO ADDRESS DIGITAL DIVIDES.

Technological adaptations needed to reorient the life of faith communities away from meeting in person have spurred remarkable changes, notably with shifts to online worship and pastoral care. However, large technological divides in access to information tools (internet and equipment as well as knowledge) reflect and accentuate patterns of exclusion. Many cannot access technology for remote worship, and clerics cannot attend to the urgent needs of most followers. Working with young people can support faith community adaptations and overcome some digital divides.

// ADDRESSING WIDE DISPARITIES WITHIN AND AMONG COMMUNITIES IN HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND OUTCOMES, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION NEEDED TO RACIAL, RELIGIOUS, AND CLASS DISTINCTIONS.

A Lancet Health Commission drew attention to the need to grapple with data gaps as well as with the realities behind wide differences among communities: "Urgent surveying should be undertaken to identify humanitarian needs and hunger hotspots, especially among the poor, older people, people living with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, women who are vulnerable, young children, refugees, people who are incarcerated, people working in high-risk jobs (e.g., meatpacking

plants or guest workers), and other minority populations (including ethnic, racial, and religious minorities).^{vii}

// POTENTIAL ROLES IN REFOCUSING ON NON-COVID PRIMARY HEALTH CARE; RELIGIOUS ROLES IN UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE (UHC).

The COVID-19 crisis highlights wide health disparities and the need for robust action at national and international levels to advance universal health coverage objectives, with a particular focus on primary health care. Furthermore, primary health care even for essential services like maternal health, child vaccination, and HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria programmes, is disrupted both by lockdowns linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and people's fear of visiting health facilities. Diverse faith community roles include direct service delivery, advocacy for national priority attention to developing health systems, and encouraging community adherence to basic health care. Two urgent needs are to support health facilities owned and run by religious bodies in their COVID-19 response and to redress tendencies for people to avoid health care so that urgent needs are not met. Attention to priority issues, including child vaccination, maternal health care, and sustaining HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other programmes is urgent, and religious organizations are directly involved and can provide support. With wide disparities capturing attention (critical shortages of ventilators

in most African countries, and lack of basic medical supplies), assuring adequate funding of health care during the crisis and far broader attention to equitable health development in the aftermath is of critical importance.

// BENEFITTING FROM THIS TIMELY OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON FUTURE PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS WITH ACTIVE EFFORTS TO ABSORB AND ACT ON SPECIFIC LESSONS LEARNED FROM EBOLA AND HIV/AIDS EXPERIENCE AND FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

Many years of health expert warnings about likely pandemics and how they can most effectively be dealt with went largely unheeded.^{viii} This included failures to learn from faith community experiences in dealing with epidemics such as Ebola and HIV/AIDS. The need for better-coordinated interactions between governments and private health providers (including faith communities) stands out. Faith actors need to sit at tables where decisions are made (notably seen in the case of adapted burial practices for Ebola), with proper attention to sensitivities. Especially important is strategic and thoughtful engagement where health perspectives and faith perspectives seem incompatible or even intractable direct conflict, but may not necessarily be. Faith actors are among those who have reflected seriously on failures to learn from past lessons. Deliberate attention to this effort could yield major benefits.

^{vii} The Lancet COVID-19 Commission, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31927-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31927-9/fulltext)

^{viii} A World at Risk: Annual report on global preparedness for health emergencies. Global Preparedness Monitoring Board. WHO, 2019. https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual_report/GPMB_annualreport_2019.pdf

// DEFINING ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS, INCLUDING ESSENTIAL SPIRITUAL SERVICES.

New designations of “essential workers” are a COVID-19 crisis feature. From nursing staff to grocery store employees, redefinitions of “essential” demonstrate how much is owed to people in certain jobs and their vital importance for societies. These designations have rarely been applied to religious leaders and others with roles in religious communities, but this needs explicit consideration given vital needs in many communities for spiritual care. Limiting religious gatherings is open to politicisation and can be divisive; other forms of religious services need to be part of the dialogue. Material welfare services (food-banks and distributions that meet basic needs, counselling and spiritual support) deserve priority as essential services, including where religious actors provide services that are indeed essential.

// SOCIAL PROTECTION SUPPORT AT COMMUNITY LEVELS.

Faith communities often step into gaps where governments fail or cannot reach communities. The economic and social effects of the pandemic have isolated and financially disempowered many in faith and broader communities, interrupting their roles or making them more demanding. Faith actors are among those who have stepped in and overcome barriers to fill social protection gaps, with child care, food distribution, homeless shelters, care of the elderly and the disabled, and other mechanisms of social support. They have both continued and ramped up these efforts in the face of the pan-

dem. Faith actors, and other grassroots and community-based actors are often the first and last responders – providing for communities before outside and more systemic responses arrive, and also sustaining support long after others have left. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for robust reviews of social protection mechanisms in many countries, that should include and build on faith community experience.

// FOCUSING ON MENTAL HEALTH.

Mental health issues are increasingly recognised as a crucial aspect of the COVID-19 crisis, and faith traditions provide some of humanity’s most important resources in dealing effectively with them. Already often stretched, COVID-19 imposes large additional burdens on communities; many volunteers and religious leaders are facing burnout. Caregivers have not been well cared for. Some older members of congregations are particularly at risk for COVID-19 and older religious leaders are themselves dying from the disease. Rising domestic violence and child abuse are related issues where faith communities have responsibilities and, in some instances, quite well-developed response mechanisms.

// RECOGNISING AND ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES.

While faith actors step into social protection gaps in different ways, efforts are often disparate and poorly coordinated. This can accentuate inequalities and tensions among religious communities. Faith communities fall

Engaging religious partners effectively before conflicts reach dangerous levels is crucial.

along a full continuum of wealth and associated advantages or disadvantages, as well as intersecting inequalities connected to race, gender, ethnicity, age, and class. Different faith responses can depend on where religious communities are located, with some serving their own communities, others acting as service providers for outside communities, and some choosing to distance themselves from social services provision altogether. This area calls for thoughtful engagement as well as reinforcing interreligious and intrareligious approaches and mechanisms that can be helpful.

// DEALING WITH OUTLIERS; RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ISSUES.

Most faith communities follow public health measures carefully, but significant minorities do not. Religious groups are embedded in their culture and the politics surrounding them, influenced by these forces and influencing society in turn. The problematic politicisation of public health issues has sometimes been exacerbated by religious dimensions, including closures of religious buildings (for example in Niger, sparking protests and demands to re-open them^{ix}), and mandates for wearing masks (as seen in the United States^x). Engaging religious partners effectively before conflicts reach dangerous levels is crucial.

The spread of inadvertent but also malicious

misinformation demands attention both in measures focused on messaging around the COVID-19 pandemic and more broadly linked to public health (family planning, for example).

Issues linked to religious freedom (Freedom of Religion or Belief – FoRB) have arisen in relation to the COVID-19 emergency, linked to the authority of governments to restrict religious practice in the interests of public health. Some religious groups have invoked FoRB rights to contest or reject public health restrictions. Both religious and secular scholars argue that it is possible to re-affirm the rights of freedom of religion for all without undermining public health restrictions. Rather, governments need to implement measures judiciously and with appropriate consultation that “accommodate as far as possible the wishes of individuals to exercise their rights to communal religious expression,” (UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief)^{xi}. Religious groups need to understand that “the prohibition of assemblies is not meant as religious discrimination and persecution. At present this measure is intended to safeguard human lives, both of the

^{ix} “Locked-down Niger braces for violence as Ramadan approaches”, April 2020. <https://www.pulse.com.gh/news/world/locked-down-niger-braces-for-violence-as-ramadan-approaches/7wvsvf1>; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/niger/covid-19-au-niger-reduire-les-tensions-entre-etat-et-croyants-pour-mieux-contenir-le-virus>

^x John E. Finn, “Freedom of religion doesn’t mean freedom from mask mandates”, August 11, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/freedom-of-religion-doesnt-mean-freedom-from-mask-mandates-144190>

^{xi} “A Conversation with UN Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed: COVID-19 and Freedom of Belief.” <https://www.justsecurity.org/70843/a-conversation-with-u-n-special-rapporteur-ahmed-shaheed-covid-19-and-freedom-of-belief/>

believers and of other members of society” (World Council of Churches).^{xii} Governments and religious leaders need to work together so that each group understands both aspects of religious freedom and public health measures, appreciating the intricacies of framing this around religious freedom and seeing possibilities to protect public health while simultaneously re-affirming the rights of freedom of religion for all.

// LONGER TERM CHALLENGES, VALUES AND RAPID PROGRESS TOWARDS EQUITABLE AND UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE.

Attention must go now to addressing longer term issues emerging through the COVID-19 crises. Especially important are religion/government relations, conscious efforts to rebuild trust in institutions, and reinforcing democratic values with respect for human rights. Respective governments should bring faith actors in to reflection and planning processes. Some governments, and even departments within governments do this better than others, so mutual learning is recommended. Some governments have involved faith communities especially well (e.g. monthly meetings in New Zealand, notable trust in government in Canada). Past experience highlights the risk that a rush to engage faith communities is often followed by waning interest which can accentuate tensions and aggravate difficult or unequal relationships with different faiths. The calls for purposeful attention both to process and strategic engagement.

^{xii} <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/conference-of-european-churches-reflects-on-freedom-of-religion-during-covid-19-pandemic>

^{xiii} Personal communication, Jean-François de Lavison, Ahimsa

Governments and religious leaders need to work together so that each group understands both aspects of religious freedom and public health measures

To achieve the Sustainable Development, WHO, and national goals for equitable and universal health coverage that reaches the most vulnerable populations, it is vital to work with organizations that are closest to these populations. That often involves religious communities, that, in a wide variety of forms, play essential roles, with expertise, competence, knowledge, and well adapted models, and organizational capacity to reach vulnerable communities. Making vaccinations and health products (tests, drugs) accessible requires such access and skills, as well as will and determination. Today some 80% of technological innovations do not have access to the market.^{xiii} Engagement of religious communities can play important roles in achieving the product adaptations and market savvy to reach large volumes at the best possible prices. Faith communities can play roles as central purchasing agencies (procurement agencies).

Religious Roles Linked to COVID-19 Emergencies

Examples of Effective Approaches^{xiv}

SEVERAL DELIBERATE EFFORTS HIGHLIGHT BOTH POTENTIAL FOR PRODUCTIVE COLLABORATION AND THE NEED FOR FAITH ENGAGEMENT IN PANDEMIC RESPONSES AND IN THE BROADER INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL COHESION CRISES IT REVEALS.

- (a) The WHO EPI-WIN department has actively reached out to faith communities both through direct inputs in drafting guidance on messaging directed to faith communities, establishing a continuing advisory group, and organizing information webinars to address coordination and collaboration efforts at national levels
- (b) UNICEF has adapted a planned faith engagement strategy and programme to address the immediate needs of COVID-19 emergency with specific regional information and outreach ses-

sions. UNHCR has established a faith advisory committee with an initial focus on the COVID-19 crisis impact on refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).

- (c) Religions for Peace has organized webinars and mobilised a special fund to support Interreligious Councils in building capacity to respond.^{xv} Different URI Cooperation Circles are working at community level to respond to urgent needs of vulnerable communities.
- (d) KAICIID (an intergovernmental inter-religious body) has provided 110 mini grants around the world to support religious institutions and leaders in their work on COVID-19 related issues. It has organized 38 different webinars on wide-ranging topics that have engaged policymakers and religious leaders.^{xvi}

^{xiv} For extensive information on faith responses see the Berkley Center/WFDD/JLI religious responses to COVID-19 project, including an extensive resource repository: <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/subprojects/religious-responses-to-covid-19>

^{xv} Religions for Peace launches Multi-religious Fund in Response to COVID-19, August 2020. <https://rfp.org/rfp-launches-the-multi-religious-humanitarian-fund-in-response-to-covid-19/>

^{xvi} See for example <https://www.kaiciid.org/dialogue-knowledge-hub/webinars/covid-19-and-religion>



Patrick Foto/Shutterstock.com

- (e) Pope Francis established a working group with five task forces to address the COVID-19 crisis, including a specific focus on primary health care as a priority and long-term pandemic readiness.^{xvii}
- (f) Countless faith communities are mobilising at the local level, with measures adapted to local norms and needs.
- (g) Ahimsa Foundation supports a network of “mobile health initiatives”, many of which are inspired by religious faith and respond to COVID-19. These include ships, trains, and mobile clinics equipped to reach those without access to health facilities where they are.^{xviii}

- (h) Faith communities are building on existing frameworks such as the Rabat Plan of Action^{xix} to link ongoing efforts to address hate speech and interreligious and interethnic tensions to specific issues arising in the COVID-19 context.
- (i) The Catholic Church is among religious organizations pressing for action to address the fiscal crises affecting lower- and middle-income countries as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, including an expanded debt repayment standstill, external debt restructuring, mobilisation of extraordinary financing, and expanded social protection measures including cash transfer programmes adapted to each country’s circumstances. Religious communities are advocating for well adapted and transparent accountability mechanisms.
- (j) The World Bank Group has actively reached out to faith communities to address collaboration efforts at the country level. As part of these efforts, the Bank has mapped the responses of 142 faith actors in the COVID-19 crisis to identify potential opportunities to collaborate with WBG client country offices.

^{xvii} “Augusto Zampini explains how the Pope’s coronavirus Task Force will work.” <https://www.romereports.com/en/2020/04/17/augusto-zampini-explains-how-popes-coronavirus-task-force-works/>

^{xviii} Ahimsa Mobile Health Initiative, <https://www.ahimsa-fund.com/wp-content/uploads/Concept-Note-Mobile-Health-Alliance.pdf>

^{xix} “Freedom of Expression vs. Incitement to Hatred: OHCHR and the Rabat Plan of Action”, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomofopinion/articles19-20/pages/index.aspx> Rabat plan of action

Recommendations for G20 Action; A Call to Action to Religious Communities

// VACCINE DEVELOPMENT, TESTING, AND DISTRIBUTION.

- G20 members must act at national levels to include religious communities in all communications about vaccine roll out in their country and listen to religious communities’ input on the best way to ensure vaccine acceptance.
- Religious leaders and communities must work to provide correct information on vaccinations, dispel rumors and misinformation, and advocate equality in vaccination distribution.

There is wide recognition that successful near-universal deployment of an effective vaccine is the only way to end the pandemic. Religious communities have important capabilities to contribute to this success, but only if they are actively engaged in both designing and implementing ways to address the ethical and practical issues involved: who gets it, when, how, and at what cost? How can appropriate confidence in vaccines

be assured, and widespread participation of individuals and communities in vaccine programmes be achieved? This will require addressing concerns about inequities in vaccine testing and distribution, fears and misinformation leading to anti-vaccination sentiments, and broader distrust of science and public health authorities. Religious communities are both affected by these issues in distinctive ways, and uniquely capable of helping ensure these issues are successfully addressed. The responsibility for leadership and collaboration falls equally to religious leaders and institutions.

// ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATED TO BROAD PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMMES DISRUPTED AND CHALLENGED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, INCLUDING GIVING A VOICE TO THE VOICELESS AND MARGINALISED.

- G20 actors should work to address health inequities and affected health

programmes in their countries that have inequitable impact on specific communities over others, including those communities representing racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.

- Religious communities should examine health inequities in their own communities and work to address those issues, through delivery of services and advocacy for change.

Religious communities and leaders can play critical roles in addressing immediate and urgent health care needs, with, generally, a sharp focus on vulnerable communities, including children and refugees. Several strong networks link these health delivery networks. Priority should go to information sharing about good practice in overcoming hurdles standing in the way of developing health care systems. Both religious communities and the G20 leaders should emphasise sharp, action-focused attention to redressing acute health disparities with particular attention to those related to race and religious identity. Giving a voice to the voiceless, listening to people about the health issues they are facing, and acting to make change should be the priority.

- Assuring adequate international and national financing of basic health care is a pandemic priority that the G20 should highlight as a topic of critical importance.
- Religious, national, and multinational engagement on health, both COVID-19

Religious communities and leaders can play critical roles in addressing immediate and urgent health care needs

related, should look to positive action steps towards achieving Universal health coverage. The health disparities unveiled by the impact of COVID-19 on different communities and incapacities to meet specific COVID-19 needs highlight the importance of systematic and sustained religious engagement in global health governance, including participation in health ministerials and think tank support for the G20 process.

- The vital religious community investment in and energetic mobilisation to address the COVID-19 crises highlights the continued need for explicit consultation and engagement mechanisms for religious communities within the G20 system.

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Giving a voice to the voiceless, listening to people about the health issues they are facing, and acting to make change should be the priority

COUNTERING HATE SPEECH: ROLES OF RELIGION AND CULTURE

Hate Speech:

A global phenomenon that demands collaboration and engagement of religious and non-religious leaders

HATE SPEECH HAS BECOME AN INCREASINGLY POWERFUL FACTOR, ITS SIGNIFICANCE MAGNIFIED BY THE INTERCONNECTIONS OF GLOBALISATION AND THE UBIQUITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA. The deliberate diffusion of misleading and demeaning information aggravates prejudice against individuals or communities, and spurs and heightens discriminatory practices, both of which can contribute to incitements to violence.¹ A broad spectrum of practices and crafted messages stigmatise disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and individuals, fomenting a climate of fear, rejection, and exclusion amongst them. Politicians in diverse settings have used hate speech to promote specific political agendas, especially during elections or transitional periods.

Though the dangers and harms associated with hate speech are widely recognised, addressing it presents complex challenges. These include difficulties in defining hate speech in law and social consensus, but still more because of tensions between efforts to control or limit hate speech and the important rights to freedom of expression.

Hate speech targets many different groups but religious and sectarian identities are commonly a focus of hate speech, singling out certain groups and individuals, and thus undermining the values of cultural and religious tolerance, diversity, and pluralism. Hate speech is a fundamental threat to societal values and human rights. Hate speech undermines human rights, including freedom of religion and belief.

Engaging religious actors and policymakers in addressing and countering hate speech is a priority concern of the G20 Interfaith Forum. G20 religious leaders and institutions, including leading interreligious bodies, are engaging with international and national policymakers to this end, but further action and partnerships are needed. By increasing mutual support through engagement, understanding, harmonisation, and coordination of efforts, the impact of efforts to tackle this global challenge can be far greater. The topic of collaborative actions and specific cooperation with religious institutions thus merits specific attention and strategic reflection by the G20 leaders at their Summit.

¹ ICCPR Article 20

Hate Speech: Definition, Triggers and Forms

THERE IS NO WIDELY ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL DEFINITION OF HATE SPEECH, AND THE CHARACTERISATION OF WHAT IS 'HATEFUL' IS OFTEN CONTROVERSIAL AND DISPUTED. The 2019 UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech² provides a well-respected definition: hate speech is understood as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, including their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor. Of note, this definition is not a legal but a working one. Indeed, hate speech is not defined in international law and the definition developed by the United Nations aims to facilitate the work of practitioners dealing with this issue, but not to imply a specific set of standards or features.

Hate speech can take various forms, including political speeches and flyers, media content, social media communications, and visual and other arts products. In its different forms, it can incite or contribute to discrimination, hostility and violence. The impact of specific hate speech varies, with for example a context conducive to violence, an influential speaker, a

speech that is widely disseminated, involving a receptive audience, or singling out a specific target playing roles. The "target" is usually an individual or group of a specific ethnic, national, religious, political, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Three levels of hate speech are significant: lawful, unlawful, and incitement. For the least severe forms of hate speech, which is lawful, non-legal responses are encouraged. Such instances include expressions that are offensive, shocking, or disturbing, denial of historical crimes of genocide (in many settings), or blasphemous speech. Levels considered intermediate may be prohibited under international law, even if they do not reach the threshold of incitement, if restrictions are provided by law and are deemed necessary in a democratic society and proportionate, and if they pursue a legitimate aim, including respect of the rights of others such as the right to equality and non-discrimination, or the protection of public order. Forms of hate speech that involve direct and public incitement to genocide, or any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence are prohibited under international law.³

² "United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech", May 2019 https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf

³ International Human Rights Legal and Policy Framework on Hate Speech, Sejal Parmar, 2020

International Landscape in Countering Hate Speech.

THE ISSUE OF HATE SPEECH IS NOT NEW, AND A TRAJECTORY OF INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS CAN BE TRACED THAT HAVE SOUGHT EFFECTIVE APPROACHES AND ACTIONS TO COUNTER HATE SPEECH. THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES ARE A SELECTED SAMPLE THAT HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE.

International law prohibits the incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence (referred to here as 'incitement') rather than prohibiting hate speech as such. Incitement is a dangerous form of speech that explicitly and deliberately aims at triggering discrimination, hostility, and violence, which may also lead to terrorism or atrocity crimes. As hate speech is not defined in international law, there is no broad international guidance to deal with it. To varying degrees, States have developed their own national legislation that provides specific parameters tailored to the national context and to the national legislation and norms for protection of freedom of expression, that define which instances of hate speech shall be prohibited and sometimes criminalised, and identifying specific mechanisms (judicial or quasi-judicial) for enforcing such legislation. There are many circumstances, however, where national laws are not in line with international human rights law.

The international community has over the past decade stepped up its response to the rise of hate speech. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has facilitated global consultations that led to the 2013 Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.⁴ The Plan aims to provide guidance on how to balance the respective provisions of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides for freedom of expression, and Article 20, which prohibits incitement of discrimination, hostility, or violence. It also introduces the six-step test that helps to identify speech that has reached the threshold of incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence and therefore need to be prohibited. The Rabat Plan of Action states that criminalisation of incitement needs to be the option of last resort and therefore applied only when there is a high likelihood that incitement can lead to violence.

Between 2015 and 2016, the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, with support from the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), held a series of consultations with religious leaders, faith-based, secular and regional organiza-

⁴ See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/RabatPlanOfAction.aspx>.

tions, as well as subject matter experts from all regions. This resulted in the 'Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes'. The Plan of Action contains three main clusters of recommendations addressed to States as well as to non-State actors, including religious leaders to prevent incitement to violence.

In a similar approach, the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen their cooperation with a particular focus on combatting hate speech and disinformation while preserving freedom of expression and promoting gender equality in their 3rd Policy Dialogue on Human Rights held on 27 November 2019 in Brussels, Belgium.⁵

The No Hate Speech Movement⁶, a youth campaign led by the Council of Europe Youth Department, has taken steps to mobilise young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online. Launched in 2013, it was rolled out at the national and local levels through national campaigns in 45 countries and has remained active through the work of various national campaigns, online activists, and other partners.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in partnership with KAICIID, through an international conference in Jakarta, 2019, gathered political decision-makers and religious leaders from different communities in Southeast Asia to enrich intercultural dialogue, enhance inter-religious and intercultural understanding, as well as combat hatred, intolerance, violence, and terrorism in Southeast Asia⁷.

Religious Community Initiatives to Address Hate Speech

KAICIID HAS TAKEN AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ADDRESSING HATE SPEECH, convinced that religious leaders and actors and policymakers can and should play significant roles in addressing and countering it. The initiatives focus on purposeful engagement with pertinent actors, efforts to enhance understanding, and

harmonisation and coordination of efforts. It has helped to increase the impact of common efforts to tackle the global challenge. In an unprecedented demonstration of multi-religious solidarity, leaders of Christian, Muslim and other religious communities from the Middle East region jointly issued the Vienna Declara-

⁵ <https://asean.org/asean-hold-3rd-human-rights-policy-dialogue/?highlight=hate%20speech>

⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign>

⁷ https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=23013&t_ref=13863&lan=en

tion⁸, "United against Violence in the Name of Religion", at the international conference organized by KAICIID on 19 November 2014. This was the first time that religious leaders and actors representing so many different religions from a crisis region had come together as one to denounce oppression, marginalisation, persecution and killing of people in the name of religion. More recently, on 30-31 October 2019, in Vienna, religious actors, policymakers and media representatives from various regions joined the KAICIID conference "The Power of Words: The Role of Religion, Media and Policy in Countering Hate Speech", which resulted in the adoption of a compelling set of recommendations on how to prevent and counter hate speech.

In 2017 the scholars of the University of al Azhar, the main theological-academic centre of Sunni Islam, submitted the text of a bill to the offices of the Presidency of the Egyptian Republic aimed at countering violence and sectarian hate propaganda and reducing hate speech justified in the name of religion.⁹ In the drafting of the bill, members of the Committee took into account universal reference texts such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the Egyptian Constitution and the provisions of criminal law in force in Egypt. The bill avoids entering into the details of the individual penalties to be imposed on those responsible for instigating religious hatred and crimes related to it, which will be specified by the judicial authority. The initiative has the explicit goal of distancing from al Azhar theories and propaganda that in parts of the Islamic community justify hate and vio-

⁸ <https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/vienna-declaration-united-against-violence-name-religion>

⁹ http://www.fides.org/en/news/62525-AFRICA_EGYPT_AL_Azhar_presents_a_bill_against_those_who_use_religion_to_justify_violence_and_hate_campaigns

¹⁰ <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Vatican-and-AL-Azhar-propose-a-Day-of-Human-Fraternity-to-the-UN-48738.html>

¹¹ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Engaging religious actors and policymakers in addressing hate speech is a priority concern of the G20 Interfaith Forum

lence by citing the Koran and drawing on religious teachings and texts.

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb, in February 2020, asked UN Secretary General António Guterres to declare 4 February an annual World Day of Human Fraternity^{10,11}. A High Committee was set up to put into effect the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace signed by Pope Francis and Ahmed Al-Tayeb on 4 February 2019 during the Pope's trip to the United Arab Emirates. It also called on the United Nations to participate, together with the Holy See and Al-Azhar, in organizing, in the near future, a World Summit on Human Fraternity. UN Secretary General

Guterres appointed Adama Dieng, at the time his Focal Point on Hate Speech and Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, as the UN representative to follow the proposed activities and work with the Committee.

In Myanmar, the Interfaith Dialogue for Peace, Harmony and Security brought together religious leaders. It supports dialogue, showing symbolically that coexistence is possible.¹² The initiative convened in July 2017 135 religious leaders and scholars from 32 countries, in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, with assistance from the Japan Foundation, the Vivekananda Foundation from India, and the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies. The state media reported that the dialogue meeting highlighted the common goal as nothing but peace, stability, and security of the human world, noting that the contemporary world lacks peace, security and stability because of variegated political, racial and religious conflicts.

In 2018, UNESCO and ODIHR produced Guidelines for Policymakers that aim to support resistance to contemporary anti-Semitism at a time when it is increasingly acute around the world. It suggests concrete ways to address anti-Semitism, counter prejudice, and promote tolerance through education, by designing programmes based on a human rights framework, global citizenship education, inclusiveness and gender equality. It provides policymakers with tools and guidance to help education systems build the resilience of young people to anti-Semitic ideas and ideologies, violent extremism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination, through criti-

Hate speech is a fundamental threat to societal values and human rights

cal thinking and building respect for others.¹³

The guidelines highlight five focus areas to address and counter hate speech, including the role of religious leaders and faith-based organizations; policymakers; media practitioners and educators:

(I) strategies & perspectives of religious leaders in addressing and countering hate speech and the mechanism of coordination, cooperation, and joint efforts amongst religious leaders in this regard, (II) the role of state actors and policymakers and the crucial role that political leadership has in addressing and countering hate speech, by developing a culture of human dignity, solidarity and living together amidst diversity, (III) the roles religious institutions & faith-based organizations play in addressing and countering hate speech and stopping the misuse of religion to discriminate against others and/or legitimise violence, (IV) responsibility of media outlets, practitioners and journalists to in addressing and countering hate speech and promoting peaceful coexistence and social cohesion, (V) the role of interreligious education as an effective tool to convey messages about dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for diversity.

¹² <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/interfaith-dialogue-peace-harmony-and-security-world-held-yangon>

¹³ Published in 2018 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe ("OSCE"), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights ("ODIHR"). 2018 UNESCO ISBN 978-92-3-100274-8

Challenges for Religious Leaders in Addressing Hate Speech

CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING AND COUNTERING HATE SPEECH INCLUDE DISCRIMINATORY PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS IN SOME CONTEXTS TOWARDS WOMEN, REFUGEES, AND ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES THAT DERIVE FROM THE FEAR OF OTHERNESS, AND/OR FROM SOME SOCIAL NORMS. CHALLENGING THEM IS A PRIORITY. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ARE SHAPED BY MANY FACTORS INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, LEGAL FRAMEWORKS, EDUCATION AND MEDIA.

// LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Many countries have laws against hate speech, but definitions vary significantly. The Law Commission Report says, "The analysis of hate speech in different countries suggests that despite not having a general definition, it has been recognised as an exception to free speech by international institutions and municipal courts."¹⁴ Different regions, including the Arab region, need policies to tackle and counter hate speech and maintain universal human rights standards within their countries, as well as engage international institutions in countering hate speech.

Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution 16/18 addresses 'combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatisation of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief'. It was adopted by consensus in March 2011 and is widely regarded as a landmark achievement of the HRC's first decade. However, the '16/18 framework' remains fragile. Rather than working together to implement the 16/18 action plan, States have regularly returned to pre-2011 arguments about the nature of the problem, the correct role of the international community, and whether the solution to intolerance lies in strengthening the enjoyment of fundamental human rights or in setting clearer limits thereon. These divisions have re-emerged, in large part, because of conceptual confusion among policymakers about what the implementation of resolution 16/18 means in practice and what it entails. There has been a related sense that Istanbul Process meetings have lost touch with their original objective and focus: to provide a space for practitioners, domestic experts, community groups, etc. to share experiences and good practices.¹⁵

¹⁴ Observer Research Foundation. Encouraging Counter-Speech by Mapping the Contours of Hate Speech on Facebook in India ISBN: 978-93-87407-91-6, 2018.

¹⁵ Meeting Report, 6th Meeting of the Istanbul Process, 2016. https://www.universal-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Meeting_Istanbul_Process_Singapore_2017_spread_low_res.pdf

// EDUCATION

Work done at the Council of Europe reveals a lack of awareness among educators of the importance of developing digital citizenship competences that promote the well-being of young people¹⁶, and highlights the need to review how schools' curricula address inter-religious and intercultural diversity. Moreover, adults need to be targeted by education programmes along with those already designed for young people.

Providing fair and affordable access to education in many parts of the world where education is still a privilege for many people is an essential challenge in promoting interreligious education to address and counter hate speech. This has particular importance for vulnerable groups including women and refugees. In short, changemaking is a very long and difficult process that requires changing programmes as well as training teachers.

// MEDIA

Misuse of traditional and social media is an enormous factor in spreading hate speech. While it is important to uphold media freedom commitments while countering 'harmful content'¹⁷, traditional and social media platforms need to become more creative spaces that promote tolerance and diversity rather than hate and conflict. An example is the 2006 UNESCO Media education kit for teachers, students, parents and professionals, which pro-

vides a complex and comprehensive view of media education, encompassing all media, old and new; it seeks new ways in which people can enhance their participation in the political and cultural life of the general community through the media. In particular, it promotes young people's access to the media, while also increasing their critical appreciation of its activities.¹⁸ Digital technology has enabled the media to reach audiences never reached before and has given rise to unreliable "citizen journalists" who use social media to influence others' opinions and perceptions. Audiences may seek deliberately for editors and journalists to spread negative messages.

Religious leaders need to learn more about online strategies to share messages that tackle hate speech from a religious perspective, notably because some media outlets disseminate radical views on issues related to faith. For example: In parts of the Arab region, some religious leaders use hate speech and incite discrimination, hostility and violence and are thus part of the problem. The media has also played a direct role in inciting hatred between candidates during elections in many parts of the world. In addition, politicians have used media to incite hate speech against refugees to divert the public's attention from the root causes of economic difficulties.

¹⁶ <https://theewc.org/ewc-contributed-to-unesco-expert-meeting-preparing-the-global-education-ministers-conference/>

¹⁷ Annual Central Asia Media Conference, OSCE, October 2020

¹⁸ Media Education: A Kit for Teachers, Students, Parents and Professionals, UNESCO, 2006, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149278>

Recommendations

THE 2019 UN STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION ON HATE SPEECH AND ON THE POWER OF WORDS CONFERENCE ON COUNTERING HATE SPEECH PROVIDES A SOUND SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES, DRIVERS, AND ACTORS INVOLVED IN HATE SPEECH. The Plan of Action points to ways to strengthen collaboration and partnerships among religious leaders and policymakers, activate existing networks and agreements, engage and support the victims of hate speech, build capacities of individuals and organizations, use education and technology as tools for addressing hate speech and advocate targeting and countering hate speech at regional and international levels.

To promote collaboration and international networking, G20 leaders, working in purposeful collaboration with religious leaders, should support and expand the following activities:

- a. Document and share best practices including historical accounts of efforts and initiatives aimed at countering hate speech;
- b. Design programmes for youth that promote common values in collaboration with the UN system;
- c. Support governments in producing guidelines for curricula on common citizenship values and ethics;

- d. Advocate rules, regulations, and legal measures that prevent discrimination against the OSCE's nine identified vulnerable groups and ensure equal citizenship for all, regardless of faith;
- e. Implement reflective learning practices in formal and non-formal education settings;
- f. Create a platform and global institution for exchanging ideas on moderation and dialogue and working together to define hate speech.
- g. Consider launching an award programme to encourage organizations and individuals who work against hate speech.

To build capacities for identifying and countering hate speech, interreligious bodies should:

- a. Train religious leaders and journalists to respond to hate speech on both traditional and social media;
- b. Train young people and empower them to take initiative and share positive messages that tackle hate speech on social media.
- c. Train people working in different or-

ganizations, faith-based organizations and NGOs, especially those working with vulnerable groups to raise public awareness on the presence of hate speech in society.

To build knowledge and increase sharing of information, international organizations including G20 members and engagement groups should provide active support in the following areas:

- a. Partnerships between religious leaders/institutions and the media;
- b. Interfaith social media campaigns to ensure religiously diverse role models;

- c. Research, documenting, and monitoring relevant statistics on hate speech incidents;
- d. Mapping out existing initiatives that counter hate speech at international and regional levels to maximise efforts and resources;
- e. Engaging decision-makers to advance and advocate policies that address and counter hate speech while ensuring the right balance between freedom of expression and hate speech.
- f. Education that raises public awareness about the important of countering hate speech.

Hate speech undermines human rights, including freedom of religion and belief.

ADDRESSING REFUGEES AND FORCED MIGRATION

Challenges and a Call to Action

THE SAUDI G20 PRESIDENCY HAS IDENTIFIED REFUGEES, MIGRANTS, AND TRAFFICKING IN ITS GOAL TO “EMPOWER PEOPLE BY UNLEASHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL, INCLUDING IN PARTICULAR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH.” The G20 Summit offers a crucial venue to coordinate and advance responses for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), who are primarily hosted in communities of low- or middle-income countries.¹ With the COVID-19 emergency heightening burdens on both forced migrants and host governments, urgent financial pressures demand action.

The many aspects of forced migration demand solutions from global leaders, as the present situation causes great human suffering and uncertainty and places severe economic, political, and social stresses on, especially, refugee-host states. Action on refugees and forced migration issues is central to the priority objectives of respecting human dignity, ending conflict, and promoting sustainable economic and

social development. The number of forced migrants worldwide is at historic highs and is growing: at the end of 2019, an estimated 79.5 million people were refugees and IDPs. The global COVID-19 pandemic and associated emergency further strain both refugees and the communities that host them. Dangerous and significant spillover effects worldwide are anticipated.

Religious institutions, including faith-based operational organizations, play substantial roles in direct support to forced migrants at all stages (advocacy, conflict resolution, service provision, resettlement) and places (conflict zones, host countries). The core values of religious communities involve compelling and unifying calls to compassion and hospitality. Deeper collaboration among religious institutions and faith-inspired organizations, G20 member governments, and those present and working in refugee-hosting communities can foster the types of “tools, partnerships, and funding” needed to implement UNHCR’s Compre-

¹ “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019,” UNHCR, 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>

hensive Refugee Response Framework and the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees. Religious actors bring to the table as a leading concern the imperative of action to protect children in forced migration settings. Religious communities act as transnational actors able to provide services and advocacy across borders.

The G20 Interfaith Association calls on leaders of the G20 to engage with religious communities and organizations in a common effort to advance, in short order and respecting the dignity of those involved,

the three-durable solutions for refugees and forced migrants: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Specific recommendations highlight the need for cooperation with faith communities on critical needs linked to the COVID-19 crisis. These include food security and health care, security and safety, and education as priorities. Action requires establishing effective coordination mechanisms with faith communities at appropriate levels, and addressing dangerous migration routes through constructive programmes.

What's at Stake:

// THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES WORLDWIDE HAS REACHED HISTORIC LEVELS AND IS CLIMBING.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that in 2019, 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, of whom 26 million were legally or practically defined as refugees. Still larger numbers (45.7 million) are displaced within their own countries (IDPs).² Of the 79.5 million, the large majority of refugees, 85%, are hosted in poorer countries, which face disproportionate burdens. Over 68% of refugees come from

five countries (Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar); 3.6 million were Venezuelans displaced abroad. The country hosting the largest number of refugees is Turkey (as it has been for some years), with 3.6 million, followed by Colombia (1.8 million), Pakistan (1.8 million), Uganda (1.4 million), and Germany (1.1 million). Many smaller states host large numbers of refugees in proportion to their population; in Aruba, for example, with a total population of 105,000, displaced Venezuelans represent one in six people, and Lebanon follows, with one in seven people of the total population of 6.8 million people a refu-

² "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019," UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>

gee.³ Rather than temporary situations, many refugees are in a limbo status for many years, as each of the three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement have come under increasing strain.

// THE NUMBER OF PROTRACTED CONFLICTS WORLDWIDE IS RISING AND FEWER REFUGEES ARE RETURNING HOME.

Conflicts, the cause of forced migration, are lasting longer and lasting peace solutions are few and far between. Protracted refugee situations in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same country have been displaced internationally for more than five consecutive years in a host country, now involve an estimated 15.7 million people, in 51 protracted situations spread across 32 different countries.⁴ In 2019, the case of Burundian refugees in neighboring Rwanda and Uganda was newly classified as protracted, but no protracted situations were removed from the list. Between 2000 and 2009, 10 million refugees were able to return to their countries of origin, while over the last 10 years only 3.9 million people were able to return home.⁵ The inability of refugees and IDPs to return home or find lasting solutions in their countries of asylum places increased burdens on international systems designed to protect and support refugees, and the communities and countries in which they seek refuge.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020," UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/coronavirus-covid-19.html>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "The Invisible Majority," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, June 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202006-cross-border-report.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "IOM COVID-19 Impact on Points of Entry Bi-Weekly Analysis," IOM, 12 August 2020, <https://migration.iom.int/reports/iom-covid-19-impact-points-entry-bi-weekly-analysis-12-august-2020?close=true>

// INTERNATIONAL LAW OFFERS FEW SOLUTIONS AND PROTECTIONS FOR IDPs.

In 2020, 50.8 million individuals were experiencing internal displacement. In a survey of 1,470 refugees, IDPs, and returning refugees, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre found that 47% of IDPs had been displaced multiple times and 57% of refugees surveyed had been internally displaced prior to becoming a refugee.⁶ Internal displacement and increased refugee flows are often linked: the inability of national authorities to protect and provide support to IDPs contributes to refugee flows as people seek protection in neighboring countries when they are unable to find safety in countries of origin. Lack of basic services, income-generating opportunities, and mobility pushes some refugees to return home prematurely, where they face impediments in returning to their communities.⁷

// COVID-19-INDUCED BORDER CLOSURES HAVE REDUCED THE ABILITY OF IDPs TO SEEK INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION.

As of August 2020, The International Organization for Migration (IOM) found that 36% of all land border crossing points globally were fully closed and another 34% were partially closed.⁸

// REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT TO THIRD COUNTRIES.

Refugee resettlement has declined at the same time that refugee resettlement needs have increased significantly. This has particular significance for G20 countries as potential hosts and a desired destination for many, though in practice third country resettlement has been an option for fewer than 1% of the global refugee population annually.⁹ Refugee resettlement is often reserved for the most vulnerable refugee populations as well as in places where hosting countries are unable to bear the burden of support. UNHCR recorded that between 2011 and 2019 the gap between refugees resettled and those needing resettlement annually grew from approximately 700,000 to 1,300,000.¹⁰ UNHCR, the UN body responsible for refugee coordination, reported that states admitted 107,800 refugees for resettlement in 2019, of which the United States represented 27%.¹¹

// DECREASING US REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AMIDST SURGING NEED.

The United States has historically been a leader in refugee resettlement, resettling over 3 million refugees from across the globe since the modern US refugee resettlement programme began after the Vietnam War in 1975. In the past few years, the number of refugees reset-

tled has declined significantly, from 85,000 in 2016 to 30,000 in 2019, with 18,000 proposed for 2020.¹²

// DEVASTATING IMPACT ON CHILDREN.

Over half of refugees and IDPs are children. The global crisis, with protracted displacement situations the sad norm, is especially devastating for children.¹³ Many face violence including abuse, trafficking, forced labor, and detention. Educational opportunities are severely curtailed, and many will live with lasting trauma.¹⁴ The COVID-19 crisis accentuates the effects on children, notably with heightened risks of violence and disrupted education.

// A HUNGER CRISIS AFFECTS REFUGEES AND IDPs DISPROPORTIONATELY, NOTABLY AS SUPPLY CHAINS ARE DISRUPTED BY THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports increasing food insecurity in conflict-afflicted countries. Without significant increases in aid and humanitarian access by the end of 2020, the number of individuals experiencing hunger could rise from pre-COVID levels of 149 million to 270 million. The World Food Program (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

have issued similar warnings, noting Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and Venezuela among 25 global hotspots.¹⁵ These countries represent some of largest countries of refugee origin. Increased food insecurity in conflict-afflicted areas will increase displacement and forced migration, adding to the pressures neighboring refugee-hosting countries in these regions experience.

// LIVELIHOODS, JOB OPPORTUNITIES, AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE OF REFUGEES AND IDPs ARE CRITICALLY CURTAILED, WITH SITUATIONS WORSENERD BY THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

In Lebanon, UNHCR reported that the number of households in which no one was employed rose from 44% to 70% between March and May 2020. More than 50% of households reported that one individual or more experienced a loss of employment within those same three months.¹⁶ Employment acts as an additional buffer for many refugee families who receive varying levels of local, national and international assistance, so loss of employment affects people closer to hunger and with limited means to purchase health services during the pandemic. Refugees and forced migrants in Africa, Asia, and Latin America reported to the Mixed Migra-

tion Centre that only 38% would be able to access health services if they experienced COVID-19 symptoms. Lack of access was higher in West Africa and Asia (48%) and lower in North Africa (28%). Refugee respondents noted lack of finance, limited understanding of health resources, and discrimination as key obstacles.¹⁷

// THE FRAMEWORK CREATED BY THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES¹⁸ HAS YET TO RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS FOR REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES.

The principles and values enshrined in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the processes established in the Global Compact on Refugees, if implemented effectively, should lighten the burdens on refugee-hosting countries, increase refugee resettlement, and lead to the establishment of new public-private partnerships between societies and organizations of all types. It represents a broad understanding of the need to share burdens and costs of refugee-hosting countries. However, the international community has to date not moved this into the realm of tangible action. Pledges under the Compact are being recorded and measured, but the gap between reported needs and pledged support falls significantly short.¹⁹

⁹ "Resettlement," UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement.html>

¹⁰ "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019," UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/coronavirus-covid-19.html>

¹¹ "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020," UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/coronavirus-covid-19.html>

¹² "COVID-19 and the Chance to Reform U.S. Refugee Policy," 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/08/11/covid-19-and-the-chance-to-reform-us-refugee-policy/?utm_campaign=brookings-comm&utm_medium=email&utm_content=g3272205&utm_source=hs_email

¹³ Elizabeth Ferris and Rebecca Winthrop, "Education and Displacement: Assessing Conditions for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons affected by Conflict", 2010, Brookings Institution.

¹⁴ Forced Migration Review, "Education: Needs, Rights, and Access in Displacement," March, 2019, https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/education-displacement/FMR60_Education_2019.pdf

¹⁵ "World's Poorest Being Pushed 'Closer to the Abyss' of Famine, Warns WFP Chief," United Nations, 17 July 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068601>

¹⁶ "Global COVID-19 Emergency Response," UNHCR, 28 July 2020, https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/28072020_UNHCR%20Global%20COVID-19%20Emergency%20Response.pdf

¹⁷ Mixed Migration Centre, "Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees and Migrants," https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/106_Covid_Snapshot_Global_3-1.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

¹⁹ "Progress Report, Measuring the Impact of Hosting, Protecting, and Assisting Refugees," UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5f0570754>



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Roles and Distinctive Contributions

// RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS ARE RICH SOURCES OF ETHICS AND VALUES THAT CAN MOTIVATE THEIR ADHERENTS TO WELCOME “THE OTHER” AND THUS SUPPORT ACTION FOR REFUGEES AND IDPs.²⁰

Narratives from many world religions centre around forced migration. Examples include the Exodus from Egypt or Exile to Babylon in Judaism, Mohammad's forced migration from Mecca to Medina (the hijra) in Islam, or the in-

fant Krishna's escape from infanticide in Hinduism.^{21,22} In commemorating these events, many religious communities recognise the need to welcome the exile. Likewise, religious traditions look to the core principle of a common human family, thus recognising the inherent human dignity of others. Faith communities and faith-inspired organizations draw on these theological resources to advocate compassion, tolerance, and peace and welcoming “the stranger”. Recognising the negative impacts of some religious voices, different traditions can

and often do work to counter racism and xenophobia and combat distorted narratives. In a statement released in advance of the 2020 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis rooted his call on the world to “welcome, protect, promote, and integrate refugees, migrants, and IDPs,” in the story of the infant Jesus's forced flight into Egypt.^{23,24} The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is charged in part with promoting action and support towards refugees and sees its charge rooted in the social doctrine of integral human development in the Catholic Church. Islamic Relief Worldwide grounds its support for refugees in the principles and teachings of the Qur'an. There are similar calls in other religious traditions.

// RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS PLAY WIDE-RANGING ROLES IN DIRECT SUPPORT TO REFUGEES AND IDPs IN MANY SITUATIONS.

Many organizations are part of humanitarian relief efforts ranging from food distribution, livelihood support, education, child protection and spiritual support. A number of organizations have missions and mandates expressly focused on refugees and migrants, while for others the work forms part of their broader programmes. The leading organizations are part of humanitarian cluster arrangements. However, a

continuing concern is the limited engagement with local faith communities both in ensuring that programmes reach the most vulnerable groups and in providing direct support.

// PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND FAITH-INSPIRED ORGANIZATIONS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PROVIDED SERVICES TO REFUGEES IN A WIDE RANGE OF SITUATIONS.

The US refugee resettlement programme stands out as an example of effective partnerships between faith-inspired organizations the government, as six of the nine refugee resettlement agencies have strong faith links. Together, they possess decades of experience supporting and assisting refugees towards integration. In Europe, individual religious communities and leaders as well as interreligious groups (both established institutions and spontaneous local responses) support widely varied initiatives to support refugees and to facilitate their integration. Since 2015, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), representing over 300 mosques, has played a critical role in the migration crisis; ZMD among other refugee-focused projects recruited 1,100 volunteers, organized German courses in over 40 mosques and opened 35 mosques as sleeping spaces for up to 200 refugees to sleep. ZMD also serves as an advocate on behalf of refugees, working with the German government to ensure better integration outcomes.²⁵ These

²⁰ Guidos, Rhina, “Jesuit presents book on how religion, ethics can shape refugee response,” Catholic News Service, 20 May 2020, <https://cruknow.com/church-in-the-usa/2020/05/jesuit-presents-book-on-how-religion-ethics-can-shape-refugee-response/>.

²¹ Niazi, Tarique, and Hein, Jeremy, “The Primordial Refugees: Religious Traditions, Global Forced Migration, and State-Society Relations,” *International Sociology* 31, no. 6 (2016): 726-741.

²² David Hollenbach, “Welcoming Refugees and Migrants: Catholic Narratives and the Challenge of Inclusion,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Volume 690, July, 2020.

²³ Pope Francis, “Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020, The Holy See, 13 May 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20200513_world-migrants-day-2020.html

²⁴ Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, “Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People,” The Holy See, <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1-Read-On-Screen-A5-EN-.pdf>.

²⁵ Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, “Flüchtlinge – Wie Kannst du Helfen?,” Oct 2015, <http://www.zentralrat.de/fluechtlinge>.

are among prominent examples of specific refugee and IDP focused programmes that involve direct support or engagement as partners in broader efforts (for example with UNHCR and the World Food Program).

// FAITH COMMUNITIES SEEKING SUPPLEMENTARY AND INNOVATIVE SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES.

The primary role in refugee resettlement ultimately falls to governments. However, faith-inspired organizations, communities, and individuals are pursuing efforts to supplement traditional refugee resettlement through private sponsorship of refugees. In Ireland, the Community Sponsorship Program allows individuals, faith groups, and other community organizations to sponsor refugees and provide emotional, social, and financial support for a specific period of time. The program had settled 2,555 individuals as of October 2019, with churches and faith-inspired organizations among those serving as sponsors.²⁶ The programme builds on the success of the Canadian community sponsorship model which has resettled over 300,000 refugees in Canada since the programme began in the 1970s, with Canadian religious communities playing a role as sponsors. The World Sikh Organization currently works alongside 26 Canadian members of Parliament to create a special programme to offer Sikh and Hindu communities in Canada

private sponsorship opportunities for Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan.²⁷ Such programs offer models both of potential partnerships and innovative approaches.

// FAITH-INSPIRED ORGANIZATIONS ARE DEVELOPING NEW APPROACHES TO REDUCE LIVES LOST CROSSING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND PROVIDE VULNERABLE POPULATIONS WITH SAFE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENTER EUROPE.

Between October 2013 and March 2019, an estimated 20,000 people lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea.²⁸ Responding to the ongoing tragedy, the Community of Sant'Egidio launched the Humanitarian Corridors project, to reduce loss of life during dangerous routes to Europe that include exploitation through human trafficking as well as dangers en route. The programmes open opportunities for vulnerable individuals to receive a humanitarian visa with potential for receiving asylum.²⁹ Humanitarian corridors in Italy are a partnership between Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy and the Italian government. For corridors from Lebanon, Sant'Egidio works with Tavola Valdese and with the Italian Episcopal Conference for corridors from Ethiopia. The government bears no cost, which is borne by Sant'Egidio and its faith-based partners which provide volunteers, housing and integration support for language, education and employment. Through October 2019, the

²⁶ Ireland Department of Justice and Equality, "Community Sponsorship Ireland: A Guide for Prospective Sponsors," 2020, <http://www.integration.ie/en/ISEC/CSI%20%20A%20Guide%20for%20Prospective%20Sponsors.pdf/Files/CSI%20-%20A%20Guide%20for%20Prospective%20Sponsors.pdf>.
²⁷ World Sikh Organization, "Save Afghan Sikhs: Joint Letter to Immigration Minister," July 2020, https://www.worldsikh.org/save_afghan_sikhs.
²⁸ Sant'Egidio, "Humanitarian Corridors in Europe," 25 Sept 2019, <https://www.santegidio.org/pagelD/34176/langID/en/Humanitarian-corridors-in-Europe.html>.
²⁹ Marshall, Katherine, Casey, Shaun, Fizgibbon, Attalah, Karam, Azza, Lyck-Bowen, Majbritt, Nitschke, Ulrigh, Owen, Mark, Phiri, Isabel, Quattrucci, Soetendorp, Rabbi Awraham Vitillo, Msgr. Robert, Wilson, Erin, "Religious Roles in Refugee Resettlement: Pertinent Experience and Insights, Addressed to G20 Members," Economics Discussion Papers, no. 11(2018), <http://www.economics-ejournal.org/economics/discussionpapers/2018-11>.

initiative had received 2,760 refugees, and has since expanded from Italy to Andorra, Belgium, and France.³⁰

// RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN REFUGEE INTEGRATION.

Many refugees join religious communities upon arrival in a second country. These communities may precede a refugee's arrival or be founded by refugees. Such religious bodies support newly arriving refugees in navigating education systems, employment and developing new cultural understanding. Faith communities may also provide mental health services, language support and a supportive community through which to find spiritual and psychological aid. This has special importance for single-parent households and unaccompanied minors who need focused and effective social-cultural support.

// RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES PLAY VITAL ROLES AS PARTNERS AND ADVOCATES AS WELL AS PROVIDERS OF SERVICES WITHIN REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES.

Among critical roles are education and trauma care, as well as knowledge dissemination and intermediary roles that build on religious

³⁰ Sant'Egidio, "Humanitarian Corridors in Europe," 25 Sept 2019, <https://www.santegidio.org/pagelD/34176/langID/en/Humanitarian-corridors-in-Europe.html>.
³¹ May 23-23, 2016, <https://www.un.org/press/en/highlights/WorldHumanitarianSummit>
³² <http://stars-egypt.org/rlap/>
³³ <https://www.fmreview.org/faith/mugnes-proserpio-deponti>
³⁴ Religions for Peace, Mary Grace Donahue. (September 14, 2020), "UNHCR and Religions for Peace form Multi-religious Council of Leaders to tackle global displacement challenges", <https://rfp.org/unhcr-and-religions-for-peace-form-multi-religious-council-of-leaders-to-tackle-global-displacement-challenges/>

actors' commonly high levels of trust. Many religious institutions, including interreligious and intrafaith bodies and faith-inspired organizations (inter alia the Catholic Church, World Council of Churches, Caritas Internationalis, Jesuit Refugee Service, Islamic Relief Worldwide, HIAS—Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Lutheran World Relief, World Relief and World Vision) have active and longstanding programmes that involve direct action to support forced migrants and global advocacy, calling notably for compassionate and actionable responses to refugees. Religious communities and major faith-inspired organizations have engaged on refugee issues, notably during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul³¹ and throughout negotiations for the Global Compacts. Religious communities are thus transnational actors able to provide services and advocacy across borders. Other services provided by faith communities include specific support for reception, admission, responses to detention, and legal support for refugee status determination (for example StARS Cairo³²) and counseling in processing and detention centers.³³

// THE RELIGIONS FOR PEACE (RFP)/ UNHCR MULTIRELIGIOUS COUNCIL TO ADDRESS DISPLACEMENT ISSUES CREATED IN SEPTEMBER 2020³⁴ offers an important platform to promote mutual exchange of experience and advocacy for action.

Recommendations

The following recommendations acknowledge the moral teachings, networks, resources, and experiences that religious communities and faith-inspired organizations have to offer to the G20 agenda in finding solutions and meaningful action to the forced migration crisis.

1. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, G20 members should give urgent attention to developing partnerships involving refugee-hosting countries, G20 members, development finance organizations and international organizations (including faith communities), to meet immediate health care needs of refugees and IDPs. Models along the lines of a G5 Sahel pilot involving the African Development Bank (AfDB), and UNHCR suggest approaches to filling health care gaps in refugee-hosting countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁵ Partnerships with local and national faith leaders can reduce challenges of public health outreach to refugee and IDP populations during the COVID crisis, including concerns about scapegoating and patterns of discrimination affecting these communities. Public health messaging that is sensitive to faith communities and that comes from trusted sources has special importance for refugee and IDP situations.

2. Partnerships on refugee and IDP issues, including with faith organizations, need urgent strengthening. At transnational and national levels, G20 leaders and governments should engage proactively with faith communities to assess critical action to support forced migrants and address the underlying crises involved. Sharing promising practices for migrant situations and long-term integration of refugees and IDPs are first steps. Given significant service delivery expertise and strong networks, faith inspired organizations possess considerable expertise that should be fully engaged. Priority should go to engaging with local faith communities and to strengthening action to address the situations of IDPs.

3. Stopping dangerous migration is a priority. G20 leaders should support broader adoption of approaches along the lines of the “humanitarian corridors”. Other dangerous migration routes exist globally around Australia, from Central America to the United States, across the Sahara Desert and the land route from Central and South Asia to Europe. Faith communities have knowledge, expertise and transnational networks that make them natural partners in origin and destination countries for such programmes. Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiatives could increase the number of countries where refugee sponsorship is a possibility.³⁶ Engagement with national level faith organizations will allow promotion of the programme’s goals and recruitment of local congregation and faith communities to the programme.

4. The Global Compact on Refugees foresees a larger number of countries involved in the refugee resettlement process. G20 leaders should address steps towards this goal with clear time frames, including engaging faith leaders to build public support for refugee resettlement.

5. Ongoing efforts to support the agenda of the Global Compact on Refugees are underway and need G20 support. Specifics include appropriate levels of financing to develop systematised indicators and monitoring mechanisms for pledges, assistance, burden-sharing and more. Funding the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is important.

6. Partnerships with faith-inspired organizations offer particular promise for two especially urgent issues: education and livelihood support (including arrangements in host countries). Such partnerships are most effective where shared values exist, local knowledge is needed and cooperation with local organizations increases local ownership.³⁷

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³⁵ US\$20 Million for Sahel Drive to Curb COVID-19, UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2020/7/5f1993eb4/us20-million-sahel-drive-curb-covid-19.html>.

³⁶ Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, “Guidebook: Community Sponsorship of Refugees Guidebook and Planning Tools, 2020, https://refugeesponsorship.org/_uploads/5c0eba1651687.pdf.

³⁷ Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, “Building More Effective Partnerships between the Public Sector and Faith Groups,” April 2015.

INTERFAITH APPROACH TO ADVANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Challenges

2020 HAS BEEN MARKED BY A CRISIS - THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RELATED RESTRICTIONS - WHICH IS AFFECTING ALMOST EVERYONE ON THE PLANET. It accentuates an ongoing global hunger for social justice, and highlights widening gaps between ideals and practices pertaining to the shared goals of quality and equality in education. These gaps are evident across the most and least wealthy of countries. In particular, the pandemic has unmasked different forms of discrimination and exclusion that marginalise children and young people who already face severe disadvantages.¹

most adversely impacted by the COVID-19 emergencies, especially those children and young people who are already vulnerable. With little to no systematic educational intervention, they are at higher risk of starvation, homelessness, physical and psychological abuse, sexual exploitation and overall physical and mental ill-being.² Girls are particularly marginalised, with increased risk of pregnancy, child marriage and physical and sexual abuse.³ There is also growing threat of violence amongst young people, including gang exploitation and cyber bullying, as fear of difference and isolation spark hatred and narratives of blame.⁴

// HIGH LEVELS OF ILL-BEING IN THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:

The disadvantaged groups in society have been

// INEQUALITY IN ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION:

With schools closed across 192 countries (in March-September 2020), affecting 9 out of 10

¹ Bhat, S., & Talreja, V. (2020) "Kindness is the New Normal - 3-part series". Available at <https://medium.com/weavinglab/kindness-is-the-new-normal-in-a-post-covid-world-part-1-2cd563a864f0>, accessed Sept. 2020

² Maguire, K. (2020) COVID-19 - the Impact on Children and Families, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, available at <https://www.nicva.org/article/COVID-19-the-impact-on-children-and-families>, accessed Sept. 2020. National Youth Agency (2020) Out of Sight: Vulnerable Young People - COVID-19 Response, available at <https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Out-of-Sight-COVID-19-report-Web-version.pdf>, accessed July 2020. NSPCC (2020) "Online safety during coronavirus", NSPCC Learning, London: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children UNICEF (2020) "Impacts of Pandemics and Epidemics on Child Protection Lessons learned from a rapid review in the context of COVID-19", UNICEF, July 2020.

³ UNESCO (2020) "Adverse consequences of school closures" available at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/consequences>, accessed Sept. 2020. UNESCO (2020) "Keeping girls in the picture", available at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation>, accessed Sept. 2020

⁴ Arigatou International (2020), "Faith Inspired Organizations in Asia Supporting, Protecting and Empowering Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic," available at <https://youtu.be/CH7Xwe6G5g0>, accessed Sept. 2020

learners worldwide, deep divides in access to education have been brought to the fore.⁵ Gender inequalities in education are more exposed during the COVID-19 outbreak, when domestic and household chores can prevent girls from accessing sufficient learning time.⁶ Children with disabilities can be neglected in the online learning strategies.⁷ Lack of consistent educational infrastructure, and inherent inequality in access to technology-based and online learning platforms, facilities and resources have resulted in "a generation losing out", most of whom are from already disadvantaged families in all societies.⁸ For instance, in Los Angeles, United States, 13% of high school students had no contact with teachers three weeks into the lockdown.⁹ The digital divide is further widened between economically wealthier and poorer nations.

// TEACHERS' STRESS AND STRUGGLE TO MEET NEW DEMANDS:

The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted teachers as they struggled to hold their personal and professional lives together whilst coping with a

wide range of educational challenges, such as the need to develop capabilities for responding to the unexpected, and meeting the demands of teaching online; finding time and space to support students who suffer from loneliness, anxiety and mental illness; and also dealing with their own fear of uncertainty, health risk, financial implications and other vulnerability.¹⁰ Some teachers feel that they need to put their own life and family wellbeing on the line, in order to carry out their duties. Students' diverse mental health and wellbeing needs can put great pressure on teachers' own welfare, and many teachers will require psychological support in order to care for and support their students.¹¹ Above all, teachers are confronted with a different way of teaching and learning as we re-imagine education in a post-COVID world where both initial and in-service teacher education and teachers' continuous professional development are in need of innovation.¹² Such reform can better enable teachers to focus on the agenda of wellbeing and equal opportunity for all, over and above the need for passing exams and achieving grades. Likewise, it will help support a new generation of societal pillars who can contribute to the global *Building Back Better* agenda.

⁵ UNESCO (2020) "Half of world's student population not attending school: UNESCO launches global coalition to accelerate deployment of remote learning solutions", available at <https://en.unesco.org/news/half-worlds-student-population-not-attending-school-unesco-launches-global-coalition-accelerate>, accessed Sept. 2020
⁶ Lui, J. (2020) "Lessons Learned from China: Bridging the Digital Divide During COVID-19", WISE, May 25, 2020, available at <https://www.wise-qatar.org/lessons-learned-from-china-bridging-the-digital-divide-during-covid-19/>, accessed June 28, 2020
⁷ IIEP-UNESCO (2020) "COVID-19 school closures: Why girls are more at risk", available at <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/COVID-19-school-closures-why-girls-are-more-risk-13406>, accessed Sept. 2020. UNESCO (2020) "Keeping girls in the picture", available at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation>, accessed Sept. 2020
⁸ United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: The impact of COVID-19 on children, New York: United Nations. United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond, New York: United Nations
⁹ National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), The challenges facing schools and pupils in September <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4119/schools-responses-to-covid-19-the-challenges-facing-schools-and-pupils-in-september-2020.pdf>, accessed Sept. 2020
¹⁰ The New York Times (2020) As School Moves Online, Many Students Stay Logged Out, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/us/coronavirus-schools-attendance-absent.html> accessed Sept. 2020
¹¹ Allen, J., Rowan, L. & Singh, P. (2020) "Teaching and teacher education in the time of COVID-19", *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(3), 233-236. United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: The impact of COVID-19 on children, New York: United Nations. UNESCO (2020) "Supporting teachers and education personnel during times of crisis", Education Sector Issue. Note 2.2, available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373338/PDF/373338eng.pdf>, accessed Sept. 2020
¹² INEE (2020) "Teaching in Times of Crisis: A Global Initiative for Teacher Professional Development", available <https://inee.org/blog/teaching-times-crisis-global-initiative-teacher-professional-development>, accessed Sept. 2020
¹³ United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: The impact of COVID-19 on children, New York: United Nations. United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond, New York: United Nations. United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, New York: United Nations

Global and Faith-inspired Responses

IN THE LIGHT OF THE CURRENT GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES PROMPTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, impacting 1.6 billion children and young people,¹³ inclusive and caring education is recognised as paramount as students from many countries are returning to school. There is a global consensus that inclusive education should be a core policy priority.¹⁴ Inclusive education is a key to enhancing students' motivation for participation and learning, raising self- and other-awareness, reducing bias and stereotypes, enriching friendships with peers and relationships with others, increasing capabilities for team work, collaboration and conflict transformation, enhancing a sense of belonging and community, reducing bullying and violence and, more importantly, improving well-

being and opportunities for all.¹⁵ In addition, increased inclusion at school level offers benefits for wider communities, improving mutual understanding, trust, civic participation, thus contributing to more cohesive society.¹⁶ Internationally, governments are putting expertise and resources together to ensure the health and safety of all students, teachers, families and wider communities.¹⁷ They are working with local and international organizations to reduce the impacts on school uptake and access of school closures and wider social challenges for vulnerable children and young people. Many governments are acknowledging the need for concerted support targeting staff and student mental health and wellbeing, and upskilling teachers in online learning practices.¹⁸

¹³ World Bank (2020a) "Learning losses due to COVID19 could add up to \$10 trillion", Education for Global Development, 10 September, 2020, available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/learning-losses-due-covid19-could-add-10-trillion>, accessed Sept. 2020
¹⁴ UNESCO (2008) Every Learner Counts: 10 Questions on Inclusive Quality Education, Paris, UNESCO. UNESCO (2020) "Supporting teachers and education personnel during times of crisis", Education Sector Issue. Note 2.2, available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373338/PDF/373338eng.pdf>, accessed Sept. 2020
¹⁵ Council of Europe (2015) "Inclusive education vital for social cohesion in diverse societies", Human Right Comments, Strasbourg: Council of Europe. United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: The impact of COVID-19 on children, New York: United Nations. OECD (2020) "Coronavirus special edition: Back to school", Spotlight 21, available at <http://www.oecd.org/education/ceeri/Spotlight-21-Coronavirus-special-edition-Back-to-school.pdf>, accessed Sept. 2020
¹⁶ Sailor, W., Satter, A., Woods, K., McLeskey, J. & Waldron, N. (2017). School Improvement through Inclusive Education, Oxford: Oxford University Press. New Brunswick Association (2020) "Inclusive Education and its benefits", available at <https://nbaclnb.ca/module-pages/inclusive-education-and-its-benefits/>, accessed Jul 2020. Hoskeri, A. (2016) "Advantages of Inclusive Education in School" India Didactics Association, available at <https://indiadidac.org/2018/06/inclusion-in-education/> accessed Sept. 2020. Hotaman, D. (2020) "Inclusive Education: Investigation of Programs in the Context of Development, Benefits, Problems and Equal Opportunity", *The Journal of International Social Research*, 13(7), 715-723
¹⁷ Rieser, R. (2008) Implementing Inclusive Education. London, Commonwealth secretariat. Fonseca, X., Lukosch, S. & Brazier, F. (2019) "Social cohesion revisited: a new definition and how to characterize it", *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 32(2), 231-253
¹⁸ International Monetary Fund (2020) "Policy Responses to COVID-19", available at <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19>, accessed Sept. 2020. World Bank (2020). "Planning for the economic recovery from COVID-19: A sustainability checklist for policymakers", available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/climatechange/planning-economic-recovery-covid-19-coronavirus-sustainability-checklist-policymakers>, accessed Sept. 2020. OECD (2020b) "Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19): The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government", available at <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/>, accessed Sept. 2020. KMPG (2020) "Government Response - Global landscape: An overview of government and institution measures around the world in response to COVID-19", available at <https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/04/government-response-global-landscape.html>, accessed Sept. 2020
¹⁹ OECD (2020) "Coronavirus special edition: Back to school", Spotlight 21, available at <http://www.oecd.org/education/ceeri/Spotlight-21-Coronavirus-special-edition-Back-to-school.pdf>, accessed Sept. 2020 UNESCO (2020) "Education: From disruption to recovery", available at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>, accessed Sept. 2020

However, from the perspective of 2020 G20 Summit's agenda, for governments to unlock their potential to realise 21st century opportunities for all, they need to go beyond unconnected actions, and unite them under a values-based vision of inclusive education that places the flourishing of every child at its centre. Inclusive and caring education also unifies and supports three of the UN SDGs 3, 4 and 5, i.e. health and wellbeing, quality and equality through education. A recent research survey has identified ways in which faith-inspired initiatives have been a key part in shaping and sustaining these visions.¹⁹

Whilst acknowledging the controversial roles of religion in societies, this finding supports a recognition that religious institutions, faith communities and interfaith networks have been pivotal in reaching out to the excluded, caring for the vulnerable, and encouraging equality in education.²⁰ Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, a wide range of faith-inspired initiatives have played distinctive roles to enrich and support local and national government strategies in inclusive education and community engagement.²¹ Illustrations of faith-inspired educational initiatives include the Learning to Live Together manual, an Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education,²² developed

by Arigatou International in close collaboration with Global Network of Religions for Children, and UNESCO and UNICEF,²³ and the faith-inspired values-based and spirituality-focused education programmes in worldwide schools promoted by the World Bank's Education for Global Development initiative.²⁴

During the pandemic, faith-based institutions and communities have been particularly active in identifying and helping those most at risk, engaging multiple stakeholders, and collaboratively making the provision of quality education more accessible.²⁵ For instance, Religions for Peace, UNICEF, together with other partners, jointly launched a multi-religious Faith-in-Action COVID-19 Campaign to involve religious leaders in global responses to the crisis.²⁶ Likewise, through its Faith in Action for Children campaign,²⁷ Arigatou International offered a series of online courses for educators from formal and non-formal educational settings to provide tools to support children's social emotional needs.²⁸ Grounded in universal human values, such as dignity, mutual appreciation, love, empathy, and respect, these faith-inspired initiatives have played a significant part in filling the gaps wrought by school closures and isolation.²⁹ They are consistent with visions of learning that are core to the world's religious

and faith traditions and multiple ways in which contemporary communities support the priority and objectives of the SDGs.³⁰

In an often values-shy political and economic climate, faith communities have articulated, encouraged, and modelled lived values to underpin inclusive and caring education through, for instance, advancing interfaith learning and teachers and caregivers modelling respect, care, empathy, equality.³¹ Valuable lessons can thus be learned from faith-inspired initiatives. These may serve as the basis for compelling and evidence-informed recommendations for the G20 leaders as they consider educational transformation.

In particular, the G20 Interfaith Forum Education Task Force's 2020 survey covering over 50 faith-inspired initiatives, literature review, and case studies have highlighted the importance of reconceptualising inclusive education as follows:

- 1) recognising and respecting the intrinsic worth of all children
- 2) being available and accessible to learners of all backgrounds, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, ability, sexual orientation, economic status, language or beliefs
- 3) focusing on the whole child, and nurturing their holistic wellbeing, including the phys-

ical, social-emotional, intellectual, moral, cultural and spiritual development

- 4) honouring students' diversity, valuing their difference and being responsive to their evolving needs in all aspects of learning, development and wellbeing
- 5) creating safe and caring learning spaces and promoting cohesive learning communities
- 6) cultivating students' agency, and attending and responding to students' voice respectfully, appreciating what everyone brings to the educational setting, and advocating solidarity
- 7) empowering all learners to participate transformative collective actions in the community and beyond
- 8) supporting all children to thrive in the face of increasing uncertainty

Such understandings provide the basis for innovative proposals towards inclusive education that can inform policy recommendations to meet the challenges for social cohesion and mutual flourishing during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

¹⁹ G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) Education Task Force (2020) Inclusive and Caring Education: IF20 Review and Survey Report 2020, G20 Interfaith Forum.

²⁰ Harvard University (2017) 'A Bridge Between School and Faith: Young people often have strong ties to faith communities. Can schools leverage those assets?', available at <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/17/10/bridge-between-school-and-faith>, accessed Sept. 2020 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) Faith in Communities: Bridging the Divide – A report on how faith communities are helping to make strong neighbourhoods, London: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Gordon, S. & Arenstein, B. (2017) 'Interfaith education: A new model for today's interfaith families', *International Review of Education*, 63, 169–195

²¹ G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) Education Task Force (2020) Inclusive and Caring Education: IF20 Review and Survey Report 2020, G20 Interfaith Forum.

²² <https://ethicseducationforchildren.org/en/what-we-do/learning-to-live-together>

²³ <https://gnrc.net/en/>

²⁴ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education>

²⁵ G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) Education Task Force (2020) Inclusive and Caring Education: IF20 Review and Survey Report 2020, G20 Interfaith Forum.

Arigatou International (2020), 'Faith Inspired Organizations in Asia Supporting, Protecting and Empowering Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic,' available at <https://youtu.be/CH7Xwe6G5g0>, accessed Sept. 2020

²⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/press-releases/launch-global-multi-religious-faith-action-covid-19-initiative>

²⁷ <https://arigatouinternational.org/en/response-to-covid19>

²⁸ <https://ethicseducationforchildren.org/online-courses/>

²⁹ G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) Education Task Force (2020) Inclusive and Caring Education: IF20 Review and Survey Report 2020, G20 Interfaith Forum

³⁰ Marshall, K. (2018). 'Global Education Challenges: Exploring Religious Dimensions.' *International Journal Of Educational Development*, 62, 184–191.

³¹ Tsimo, C., & Wodon, Q. (2014) 'Assessing the Role of Faith Inspired Primary and Secondary Schools in Africa: Evidence from Multi-Purpose Surveys', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 12:2, 5–15 Gill, S. & Thomson, G. (eds.) (2014). *Redefining Religious Education*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Khan, H. (2015) 'Interfaith Contributions to a Just Society', *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, 48(2), 46–53

Areas for policy recommendations and actions

Drawing on the G20 Interfaith Forum Education Task Force's research report,³² and the analysis of faith-inspired initiatives, and supported by a rigorous consultation process, this brief identifies three priority areas to explore in a cross-sectional effort to promote inclusive and caring education:

- A. **Advancing wellbeing of all as the aim of education**
- B. **Ensuring participation of all learners within richly inclusive learning environments**
- C. **Aligning teachers' professional development with the wellbeing and inclusion focus**

We unpack these briefly below, posing three recommendations within each broad area.

// ADVANCING WELLBEING AS THE CENTRAL AIM/PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, widespread reflection on global social injustices has stressed the ongoing need for all aspects of schooling to focus on nurturing the wellbeing of the whole-child. A faith-inspired emphasis on wholeness is rooted in a recognition of the diversity amongst all students and within each child. This central aim suggests that approaches to curriculum and pedagogy should be wellbeing-sensitive. Some governments, such as Australian, Finnish, UK, Bolivian, and Scottish governments, have provided a national framework for wellbeing in schools. Other countries, such as Bolivia, Bhutan, Mauritius, Malawi, Zambia, and Kenya have incorporated spiritual components into their conception of wellbeing.

Promoting wellbeing of all students in the learning community

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable populations worldwide. It further unveils the persistent social deprivation of marginalised groups who are often subject to structural discrimination due to their

identities. Systemic transformation is required to shift educational priority to the wellbeing of all students. This suggests that the overall aim of education and relevant strategies need to focus on all aspects of the child's development, including the physical, social emotional, intellectual, ethical and spiritual. This is a values-based ethos, incorporating interreligious and intercultural education, ethical education, social emotional learning (SEL) and spiritual development.³³ In India, in partnership with the Delhi Government, Dream-a-Dream has developed the Happiness Curriculum, intended to strengthen the foundations of wellbeing for all students, and aimed at enriching teacher-student relationships in schools.³⁴ One million children in Delhi have benefitted from this programme, including better student-teacher relationships, increased student participation in learning and greater capacity to focus in class.³⁵ In China, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF, Beijing Normal University and the provinces in western China have developed Child Friendly Schools programmes, integrating SEL practices in ensuring students' wellbeing.³⁶

The path for governments to support such a shift in focus can build on a wellbeing framework that outlines the renewed aims of education and the principles that guide the education system. This can be practically advanced with deliberate efforts that, in a strategic planning process, draw on the common values that exist amongst communities of faiths, and of no faith, and

through inclusive consultation. The expertise of faith- and values-inspired organizations may be invaluable in supporting these processes to enable a more inclusive conception of wellbeing, which would serve as the basis for equitable and caring practices and actions in schools and communities.

Introducing inclusive curricula

Fear and isolation, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and other social uncertainties, have heightened narratives of hate and blame, magnifying tensions and conflicts between people of diverse faiths, race, cultures, and traditions. To bridge interreligious and intercultural divides, challenge and prevent xenophobia and discrimination and promote the wellbeing of all, schools need to be mandated and equipped to provide an inclusive curriculum which can enrich students' appreciation of difference, enhance mutual understanding and respect, and deepen empathy and compassion. Engaging students in meaningful encounters and relations with those of different faiths, cultures and traditions can better immunise them against stereotypes and prejudices. Inclusive curricula tend to open up spaces for dialogue about social issues from different perspectives/worldviews, further enriching students' empathy, open-mindedness, critical thinking and motivation to bridge differences.³⁷ In the UK, Birmingham City Council collaborated with local Council of Faiths in developing an agreed syllabus

³³ Gill, S. & Thomson, G. (eds.) (2014). *Redefining Religious Education*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Gill, S. & Thomson, G. (eds.) (2020). *Ethical Education: Towards an Ecology of Human Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

³⁴ <https://dreamadream.org/>

³⁵ Brookings Institution (2020) "Development of student and teacher Measure of Happiness Curriculum factors", available at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/development-of-student-and-teacher-measures-of-happiness-curriculum-factors/>, accessed Sept. 2020

³⁶ <https://www.unicef.cn/en/topics/child-friendly-schools>

³⁷ UNESCO Associated Schools (2013) *Intercultural Dialogue in Support of Quality Education*, Paris: UNESCO

³² G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) Education Task Force (2020) *Inclusive and Caring Education: IF20 Review and Survey Report 2020*, G20 Interfaith Forum

bus on interreligious education.³⁸ Likewise, the UNAOC Fellowship Programme aims at fostering intercultural exchange and interfaith understanding by engaging with young civil society leaders and professionals from Europe, North America, and the Middle East and North-Africa (MENA).³⁹ The involvement of religious leaders, and faith/interfaith actors and communities is key to inclusive curricula, enabling students of different religions, faith traditions, and beliefs to become more conversant with diverse religious and cultural narratives, positive values, and humanising practices.⁴⁰

Governments need to do this by reviewing and further introducing interfaith and intercultural learning elements into inclusive school curricula across all ages. The collaboration of local faith/interfaith actors in the design and development of school interfaith and intercultural curricula is imperative. Such collaborative efforts not only introduce inclusive curricula to schools, but also consolidate social cohesiveness amongst different faith communities. Partnerships with faith/interfaith communities are key to rebuilding trust after interruptions.

Prioritising collaborative and co-creative learning

The COVID-19 crisis further reveals that the

most vulnerable students are also disadvantaged by an overemphasis on academic achievements, standardisation through testing and competitive school practices.⁴¹ To ensure the inclusion of all students in quality education, and to nurture their wellbeing, innovative approaches, such as interactive, empathy-focused pedagogies, arts-based learning, dialogic collaborative learning and project-based learning, are most desirable in 21st century classrooms.⁴² Such transformative approaches put the student at the centre of education, and focus on cultivating human qualities key to wellbeing, such as critical thinking, appreciation of diversity, and positive relations with others. Collaborative and co-creative practices respect all students equally and are responsive to their socio-economic, cultural, religious, and other differences, and diverse needs. In Finland, inclusive pedagogies tend to focus on cultivating mutual trust, and facilitating collaborative project-based learning as in part nurturing students' wellbeing. Globally, in partnership with KAICIID, the World Organization of the Scout Movement is introducing the Dialogue for Peace programme to Scouting worldwide,⁴³ contributing to children and young people's wellbeing, whilst strengthening social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Governments need to promote collaborative and co-creative approaches to teaching and learning in schools. This can involve collaboration with religious and faith actors to

introduce initiatives and practices of intercultural and interfaith dialogue in schools, peer-to-peer collaborative learning in classrooms and opportunities within and beyond the classroom for students to express themselves through creative media, arts, and community engagement.

// ENSURING PARTICIPATION OF ALL IN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised significant issues concerning school uptake and attendance, in particular, in the most marginalised communities, and especially amongst girls.⁴⁴ It also brings to the fore the divides between schools, parents and communities, with parents and communities typically outsourcing education to schools with little day-to-day involvement in children's learning. The pandemic thus accentuates the vital importance of ensuring Education for All. To this end, education should be understood and supported as an eco-systemic endeavour that requires the engagement of all stakeholders – students, teachers, schools, parents and communities.⁴⁵ A shift towards an eco-system approach to partnership is feasible if it is grounded in mutually support-

ive interconnections between government, NGOs, faith communities and organizations, schools, families and children, as well as the media, businesses and enterprises, and academia, where everyone contributes towards the endeavour of inclusive education.

Engaging (all) young people and empowering student voice, agency and dialogue

At this time of crisis, youth at the margins and students from vulnerable groups tend to feel unheard and unengaged, leading to cycles of disaffection, aggression, and crime.⁴⁶ Inclusive learning environments are essential to inspire youth engagement in education, increase relational resilience, reduce youth apathy, and strengthen students' voice, agency and social responsibilities.⁴⁷ Youth engagement also helps connect young people to their communities and bring them closer to the diverse realities in their societies, with a view of transforming them.⁴⁸ An intentional investment in students' life skills, capacity for democratic participation, experience of lived citizenship, and social-emotional learning (SEL) will serve to empower all students.⁴⁹ An illustration is the UNAOC Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF).⁵⁰ YSF provides seed funding to youth-led organizations

³⁸ <https://www.faithmakesadifference.co.uk/>
³⁹ <https://www.unaoc.org/what-we-do/trainings-and-exchanges/fellowship/>
⁴⁰ Gill, S. (2014). "Interreligious Education" in S. Gill & G Thomson (eds.) *Redefining Religious Education*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan
⁴¹ Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J. & Viruleg, E. (2020) "COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime", McKinsey and Company, June 1, 2020, available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/COVID-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime#>, accessed Sept. 2020. Berlak, H. (2020) "Race and the Achievement Gap", *Rethinking Schools*. Available at <https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/race-and-the-achievement-gap/>, accessed Sept. 2020
⁴² OECD (2018) *Education 2030: The Future of Education and Skills*, Paris: OECD
⁴³ <https://www.scout.org/dialogue4peace>

⁴⁴ Plan-International (2020) "How will Covid-19 Affect Girls and Young Women?", available at <https://plan-international.org/emergencies/covid-19-faqs-girls-women#:~:text=Girls%2C%20especially%20those%20from%20marginalised,secondary%20impacts%20of%20the%20outbreak.&text=Economic%20stress%20on%20families%20due,labour%20and%20gender%2Dbased%20violence>, accessed Sept. 2020. United Nations (2020) *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*, New York: United Nations. Action Aid (2020) "How is Covid-19 affecting girls around the world?" Available at <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/blog/news/2020/05/21/how-is-covid-19-affecting-girls-around-the-world>, Accessed Sept 2020
⁴⁵ UNESCO (2020) "Keeping girls in the picture", available at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation>, accessed Sept. 2020
⁴⁶ <http://www.iicba.unesco.org/?q=node/339>
⁴⁷ UNESCO (2020) "Adverse consequences of school closures" available at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/consequences>, Accessed Sept. 2020.
⁴⁸ Vallee, D. (2017) "Student engagement and inclusive education: reframing student engagement", *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(9), 920-937
⁴⁹ Biesta, G. (2014) *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, New York: Paradigm.
⁵⁰ <http://www.iicba.unesco.org/?q=node/339>
⁵¹ <https://www.unaoc.org/what-we-do/grants-and-competitions/youth-solidarity-fund/>

that propose projects with innovative and effective approaches to intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Similarly, in Europe, the youth-led interfaith movement, Coexister, is active in contemporary pluralist societies in Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium and the UK. The movement engages young people in inclusive dialogue and collaborative practices that are non-confessional and non-partisan, aimed at exploring the good life in peace and harmony.⁵¹ The key to youth engagement lies in regarding young people as active participants of learning and agents of social change. Engagement, above all, can contribute to the empowerment of girls, youth with special educational needs and disabilities, and other marginalised youth.

Governments can give priority to this objective by elaborating strategic plans that involve multi-agency partnerships (e.g. schools, families, social workers, counselors, faith-actors, NGOs) to identify and target students at the margins, including vulnerable groups and girls. Student voice and social responsibility can be nurtured by setting educational policy consultation processes grounded in listening to the perspectives of students. Financial support to programmes aimed at engaging youth, nurturing student voice and confidence, and developing life skills and leadership qualities can speed the process of transformation. Likewise, more funds and time can be invested in creating spaces for SEL practices and opportunities for collaborative projects that engage students' agency, and promote social coexistence.

⁵¹ <https://www.coexister.fr/>

⁵² American Psychological Society (2020) "Stress in America 2020: COVID-19 Stress is Taking a Toll on U.S. Parents", available at <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2020/report>, accessed Sept. 2020.

Fear and isolation, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and other social uncertainties, have heightened narratives of hate and blame

Forming partnerships among schools, families and faith communities to support all children

With schools closed during the COVID-19 pandemic or offering limited support, families, especially the most vulnerable, can face extreme strain in supporting of student learning.⁵² There is a clear need for building parents' capacities to support and ensure learning and wellbeing of their children. Faith communities have long been working to meet such needs by mediating between schools, families, and children, and their part can be recognised formally in partnerships between families, schools and local governments. A strong case is found in the Aga Khan Foundation's (AKF) approach

to supporting inclusive learning.⁵³ During the COVID-19 pandemic, AKF has partnered with families, schools, communities and local government agencies, to reinforce the important roles played by all stakeholders, and provide advice and resources for families and educators to support inclusive education and learning. Equally illustrative is the work of the award-winning International Child Development Programme (ICDP) that focuses on formulating and nurturing constructive partnerships between families and communities, including building parents' and caregivers' capacities to support children's wellbeing.⁵⁴ Likewise, in Philadelphia, United States, schools have been actively encouraged to create partnerships with faith-based organizations and faith communities since the late 1990s. These partnerships are guided by the needs of the schools and are sponsored by faith partners. Mentoring, sports, drama, games and homework assistance are the most common after-school activities supported by the faith-based partnerships. These cases highlight the potential of collaborative partnerships in developing inclusive learning environments within which to nurture children's (and families') wellbeing.

Governments can advance their objectives by evaluating promising practices, and developing strategies and plans, including specific policy directives, that formalise community-driven partnerships that bring together schools, families, and faith-based organizations and communities. This may involve the establishment of grant

⁵³ <https://www.akf.org.uk/our-educational-response-to-uncertainty/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.icdp.info/>

⁵⁵ Gross, J., Haines, H., Hill, C., Francis, G., Blue-Banning, M. & Turnbull, A. (2015) "Strong School-Community Partnerships in Inclusive Schools Are 'Part of the Fabric of the School/We Count on Them'", *School Community Journal*, 25:2, 9-34

⁵⁶ <https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/>

schemes to support promising collaborative partnerships.

Strengthening links between schools, faith communities, and wider society

Inclusive education depends on strong inter-school links and community partnerships, engaging in concerted efforts to support the most vulnerable.⁵⁵ These partnerships are regarded as part of the fabric of both the community and the school. When schools, relevant agencies, faith communities, local NGOs, businesses and families work closely together, collaborative actions can enable young people to experience meaningful facets of their education, extending well beyond school exams. This can include youth employment, community service, active citizenship and broad efforts to identify and address the needs of society and vulnerable citizens. For example, the New Zealand government has integrated Maori religious values and spiritual practices in inclusive educational policies, not only uniting people of different faiths in inclusive learning communities, but also serve to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students.⁵⁶

Governments should ensure such links and partnerships by reviewing current policies directed towards inclusion and community involvement, in an inclusive manner, with a view to elaborating focused strategies and

appropriate policy instruments that promise to enhance both care economy and social protection infrastructure and that identify and assure funding for innovative collaborative community partnerships.

// ALIGNING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A WELLBEING AND INCLUSION FOCUS

Teachers and school leaders are core advocates for inclusive education. An inclusive vision of education locates the teacher as a mentor, facilitator and guide, more than simply as an instructor.⁵⁷ Education can enable teachers to be more sensitive to students' diverse needs and create positive environments within classrooms and beyond to ensure inclusion and care for all.⁵⁸ As the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore, these parts of the mentor, facilitator and guide are also played by faith actors, community volunteers and caregivers within communities.⁵⁹ Post-COVID, teachers need dedicated support to develop the relevant capabilities to nurture children's wellbeing and whole-person growth. Thus investment in the professional development of teachers and educators that focuses on helping them to reflect on their religious beliefs, values and worldviews and to explore, uncover and discover their own

inherent biases and judgements which they bring into a classroom as a role-model, and to interrogate their role as an educator in nurturing the whole child, are key to activating inclusive education.

Reviewing national capability frameworks for teachers' professional development

With mounting pressures on adequate funding, the most enduring investment in education is to support teachers' professional learning.⁶⁰ To this end, a strong and contextualised Teacher Professional Development Scheme, which places holistic wellbeing at its core, is critical for teachers to advance their knowledge, attitudes, values and qualities at a professional and personal level, reflect on teaching practices and ensure their wellbeing. For instance, the OECD Teacher Well-being and Quality Teaching Project is a perfect elucidation of the imperative to connect teachers professional development with their wellbeing.⁶¹ Likewise, the Irish government has developed the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018- 2023 that provides a definition of wellbeing and an overarching structure encompassing the existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of wellbeing in education.

Governments should review their national

capability framework for teachers' professional development, in dialogue with religious institutions and faith-inspired organizations. Involving faith actors in dialogue can help evaluate the framework's implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education, root the framework in the pluralist society and develop shared vision and language in articulating what constitutes good teaching, the qualities, attitudes, and values desired, and competencies and capabilities required, to meet the aims of inclusive education. Such a review would also address how teachers and schools might further enter into dialogue with leaders of faith-inspired educational initiatives to consider how to use the framework for educators' self- and peer-evaluation, as well as whole-school evaluation.

Enhancing teachers' awareness, sensitivity and appreciation of diversity and inclusion

As diversity increases across G20 countries and globally, education can help students connect with one another in deep, respectful, and compassionate ways, equip them with the arts of transforming conflicts non-violently and enable them to contribute meaningfully to the thriving of their communities. This requires teachers to be more aware of their own values and attitudes, unseen biases and prejudices

and to appreciate rich diversity in their classrooms. For instance, the Kenya Ministry of Education and UNESCO National Commission are jointly developing professional learning opportunities to cultivate teachers' awareness, sensitivity and capability in helping children learn to respect diversity and enabling young people to live peacefully in the diverse communities.⁶² Additionally, UNAOC and UNESCO have co-created an interactive Media and Information Literacy (MIL) platform for teachers where resources can be shared, adapted, used and re-uploaded by users at will. They are organized around the model Media and Information Literacy Curriculum published by UNESCO, available in 9 languages. The aim is to facilitate intercultural/interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding through MIL. Such initiatives can truly support teachers to embody values of respect, pluralism, tolerance and empathy, appreciate inclusiveness and attune their pedagogical approaches to inclusive and transformative practices.



Ravi Putcha

⁶² <https://commonthreads.sgi.org/post/130800262798/peace-education-initiatives-in-kenya>

⁵⁷ Gill, S. & Thomson, G. (2016). Human-Centred Education: A Practical Guide. London: Routledge

⁵⁸ Gill, S. & Thomson, G. (eds.) (2020). Ethical Education: Towards an Ecology of Human Development. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

⁵⁹ Arigatou International (2020). "Faith Inspired Organizations in Asia Supporting, Protecting and Empowering Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic," available at <https://youtu.be/CH7Xwe6G5go>, accessed Sept. 2020

⁶⁰ Office of Development Effectiveness (2015) Investing in Teachers. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Commonwealth of Australia, available at https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1017&context=teacher_education, Accessed Sept. 2020. Yousafzai, Z. (2017) "Teachers are nation-builders. Developing countries must invest in them properly", The Guardian, Oct 9, 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2017/oct/09/teachers-are-nation-builders-developing-countries-must-invest-in-them-properly>, accessed Sept. 2020.

⁶¹ Viac, C., & Fraser, P. (2020) "Teachers' well-being: A framework for data collection and analysis", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 213, OECD Publishing, Paris

Governments should include training modules on diversity and inclusion for all teachers' pre- and in-service professional development, with a focus on pedagogical tools to develop inclusive, appreciative and collaborative learning practices and environments. Regular in-service professional development opportunities that support teachers to explore unrecognised biases, prejudices and judgments in classrooms are also desirable. This process should involve local faith/interfaith groups to target cultural, religious and institutional obstacles to inclusion.

// ENABLING TEACHERS TO FACILITATE TRANSFORMATIVE, COLLABORATIVE AND DIALOGIC LEARNING

Achieving an inclusive vision requires that teachers engage in innovative practices, such as the facilitation of transformative, collaborative and dialogue-based learning, which foreground relationships and embody the values of inclusivity, respect and mutual appreciation. Inclusive pedagogy is often strengthened through a community of practice so that teachers can experience and internalise dialogic and collaborative learning in co-creative inclusive spaces, and through peer-to-peer mentoring, professional sharing and connecting with multi-disciplinary expertise.⁶³ Given the sudden focus during the COVID-19 pandemic on digital learning,

and the widespread challenges this has posed to teachers,⁶⁴ this should include upskilling all teachers in the pedagogical use of digital technology that sustains sensitivity to and care for the child at its centre. At the same time, digital access can mean increased students access/vulnerability to discriminative, divisive and even extremist discourses. Professional learning for teachers will include helping students build resilience to hate-based narratives online and offline. AKF was amongst the first to respond to such needs, and has developed free online courses aimed at helping educators gain new ideas, skills and strategies about how to lead inclusive learning environments using real-life illustrative practices from around the world.⁶⁵

Governments need to take deliberate steps to provide time, space and resources to ensure that all teachers are trained and continuously mentored in facilitating inclusive, collaborative and dialogue-based learning both in classrooms and online. This requires ringfenced funding for pre- and in-service training, developing tools and mechanisms to keep teachers connected and spaces for sharing good practices and supporting each other, including collaboration with relevant faith/interfaith groups who have experience in providing inclusive learning spaces.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented and global crises in education. This comes on top of widely recognised challenges to the quality and inclusiveness of education systems in virtually all nations. The crisis disproportionately affects the most vulnerable, who are, in most societies, already severely marginalised. During the COVID-19 linked school closures, problems were starkly revealed but innovations also took place. Among others, religious institutions, faith-based organizations and communities and interfaith networks in all corners of the globe stepped in to bridge gaps with bold efforts to reach out to the needy, especially those children and young people who are at risk of being excluded, abused and exploited. Faith-inspired educational initiatives have played vital roles in some settings in coordinating with national and global efforts to ensure inclusive education.

This offers an invitation for the G20 governments to collaborate closely with local and global religious communities, faith-based organizations and interfaith networks in reflecting deeply on the opportunities presented by the COVID-19 crisis in terms of co-creating a culture of inclusion and caring in education. Faith-inspired initiatives not only offer values-based educational services to ensure the inclusion of the most vulnerable, and care for them; they also provide additional educational resources, deep understanding of the needs and lived realities of the local communities, and close

connection with religious leaders, faith actors and influencers and families. The G20 governments have clear responsibilities to proactively build bridges that link diverse faith-inspired educational initiatives across convictions and beliefs to draw on their rich experiences. Dialogue with religious leaders and faith actors and influencers about policies concerning inclusive and caring education is paramount to the G20's vision of realising opportunities for all.

In the light of their creative and pathfinding approaches and actions to support inclusive and caring education, and their potential to support educational transformation towards wellbeing, the G20 Summit should consider mechanisms to invest and support the essential research to better understand the impact of faith-inspired educational initiatives, with a view to collaborating with religious leaders and faith actors and influencers in policy dialogues and educational programme implementation.

Drafted by Scherto Gill/ Katherine Marshall; Reviewed by Patrice Brodeur/ Nicole Fournier-Sylvester/ Stephen Shashoua/ Nafisa Shekhova/ Alice Sommerville/ Maria Lucia Uribe Torres/ Vishal Talreja

⁶³ UNESCO (2020) "Supporting teachers and education personnel during times of crisis", Education Sector Issue Note 2.2", available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373338/PDF/373338eng.pdf>, accessed Sept. 2020

⁶⁴ Phillips, L., & M. Cain (2020) "Exhausted beyond measure: what teachers are saying about COVID-19 and the disruption to education" The Conversation. Aug 3, 2020. available at <https://theconversation.com/exhausted-beyond-measure-what-teachers-are-saying-about-COVID-19-and-the-disruption-to-education-143601>, accessed Sept. 2020

⁶⁵ <https://www.akf.org.uk/akf-launches-inclusive-learning-environment-video-courses-for-educators/>



GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN COVID-19 EMERGENCIES

Trust and Accountability: Towards Action

TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE VITAL TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 EMERGENCIES, FOR GOVERNMENTS, RELIGIOUS ACTORS, CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS AND BUSINESSES. Imperative steps include preemptive action to assure open and honest use of funds mobilised to support health interventions and to provide urgent services to vulnerable populations. G20 leaders and religious institutions and communities can and should take concrete and transparent steps to this end.

The G20 Interfaith Forum has highlighted the importance of engaging religious actors purposefully in global anti-corruption alliances over the past few years, but the COVID-19 emergencies lend special urgency to the task. The 2019 recommendations from the G20 Interfaith Forum to G20 leaders urged that governance be a central theme of the 2020 G20 Summit, with specific commitments to continuing action to combat corruption and poor governance and to increase transparency, accountability and protection for whistleblowers. This should involve partnerships to broaden tools and coalitions that address corruption

and reinforce values of integrity at community, national, and global levels.

Corruption takes different forms in different settings, but it fuels anger and cynicism everywhere. This undermines efforts to advance on virtually any front, including mobilising emergency responses to a pandemic, fighting poverty, addressing education priorities, acting on climate change, and supporting those who are most vulnerable. Fighting corruption thus belongs at the center of global policy agendas.

Religious actors can be powerful allies in the effort but are insufficiently involved. They can pinpoint and document the daily corrosive effects of corruption on poor communities and, individually and collectively, build on shared ethical teachings to bolster effective action. In contrast, their silence and acquiescence can abet corrupt actors, public and private. Religious actors need to be an integral part of addressing corrupt practices within their own communities. They can contribute to efforts to address corruption at community, national, and global agendas. Among priority areas

for action are reinforcing values of integrity through religious and religiously provided education and forming strong partnerships with various integrity alliances.

to rebuild trust and integrity in governance and public services. A forthright focus on meaningful partnerships to fight corruption is an essential part of the goal.

The G20 Interfaith Forum in October 2020, highlights the importance of governance issues across the full agenda as they affect prospects for health, peace, human development, and protection of the planet. G20 leaders need to heed the insights of religious communities and commit to continuing engagement with broad civil society and private networks that include religious actors, as they act decisively

With trust as a central issue in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, three imperatives merit urgent attention: (a) assuring full transparency in the development of vaccines and therapies, including on finance; (b) assurance of "corruption proofing" of funds mobilised for health services and to serve vulnerable populations; and (c) concerted efforts to address misinformation and hate speech.

Challenges

PERCEPTIONS OF WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES FEED CITIZEN DISENGAGEMENT AND ANGER WHICH EXPLAINS IN SIGNIFICANT MEASURE THE APPEAL OF BOTH POPULISM AND EXTREMISM. Bribery is shameful and illegal in all cultures and it violates divine paradigms. Fighting corruption demands the engagement of all sectors of society, but with special applications for religious communities. Their roles highlight the strong moral compass and granular local knowledge needed to navigate the modern complexities of corruption. Hope and confidence are essential to ensure that fighting corruption is possible, with will, good ideas and persistence.

leaders who have highlighted the ills of corruption, which undermine both the natural environment and human society, hanging like a dark cloud over progress in many countries. "Corruption can be avoided and it demands the commitment of one and all." Religious leaders from many traditions echo similar calls. Action, however, falls far short of rhetoric.

// FACETS OF MODERN GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Corruption is as old as human societies. Widely held ideals and expectations that rule of law and notions of justice and fairness will govern societies speak to aspirations, shared across

Pope Francis is among the global religious

cultures, for honest government. Surveys underscore the widespread expectation that leaders will serve as stewards of the people, with their direction inspired and guided by notions of human rights and democratic principles, which include integrity and honest use of resources for the benefit of the governed.

The COVID-19 emergency highlights roles of governance, trust, and accountability as citizen trust in institutions is a vital prerequisite for effective pandemic response. With massive funding mobilised swiftly, challenges of proper oversight and assurance of honest delivery take on special importance. Watchdog functions thus have particular urgency.

Global movements like Transparency International and the International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) address the complex forces at international, national and community and municipal levels that undermine good governance and erode trust in institutions. They focus on traditional issues like bribery and political corruption as well as more modern topics like distortions through mass communications; social media, for example, works both for good and evil; interrupting patterns that permit elites to capture power but also sowing misunderstanding, misinformation, and strife. Corrupt practices accentuate disparities in access to services and contribute to exclusion including by race and religious affiliation.

Six elements shape global and national drives towards accountability and integrity:

- **Corruption is a widespread, shared concern across the world.** A 2011 survey covering 23 countries, carried out

for the BBC, found that corruption was the topic most frequently discussed by the public, ahead of poverty, unemployment and rising costs. Nearly a quarter of those surveyed said they had discussed corruption recently and many ranked it the most serious problem facing their society. When people speak of ethics and politics, corruption is often the leading edge. The myth that many societies accept corruption as a norm is patently false: people everywhere hate corruption

- **An essential, foundational element of good governance, sorely lacking in many countries, is the rule of law.** This must be a foundation for combatting corruption. Corruption corrodes the rule of law, which promotes impunity and undermines accountability. Specialised, independent mechanisms in the law enforcement and judicial areas with the mandate, training and authority to be effective in tackling corruption in government and the private sector are urgently needed. This requires adequate legislation and cross border cooperation (missing in many countries) and effective implementation mechanisms. Combatting corruption in the private sector requires strong compliance regimes, backed by criminal sanctions, strong whistleblower protection, and incentives and protection for justice collaborators.

- **Democratic systems are threatened at their core by corrupt practices.** When young people see their

societies as irremediably corrupt, the temptations of extremist promises have wide appeal. Likewise, populist and autocratic leaders feed on anger against corruption and the promise of strong, often authoritarian measures to right the society.

• **National strategies to fight corruption systematically are relatively new.** Managing public procurement and finance and punishing theft have long roots but seeking a national approach that looks professionally and systematically at how to change both public management systems and the culture that permits corruption has taken hold quite recently. Not long ago, mainstream economists and politicians often argued that corruption served as “grease for the motor”, acceptable within a given culture. Such arguments are rarely heard today, and corruption is widely seen as an evil, a cancer that eats away at social cohesion. It is “sand in the engine”. Governments and nations are judged by their levels of integrity and quality of administration.

• **Meaningful efforts to fight poverty and assure prosperous and equitable societies depend on public integrity.** Efficient use of resources is vital for delivering services like education and health. The damage to pension programs, social protection, quality education, and decent health care from corrupt systems go far beyond the direct damage inflicted because they erode trust. Business-

es increasingly avoid investments in corrupt environments where governance is poor.

• **Corruption thrives in environments of religious and ethnic intolerance that marginalise groups.** Discrimination makes groups and individuals vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of criminal mistreatment. Corruption of various kinds protects those who promote intolerance, incite violence against marginalised religious groups, or profit politically and/or economically from such conduct. Corruption undermines the protections that constitutions, laws, and international obligations provide for freedom of religion, belief, and conscience, freedom of expression, and protection from discrimination on legal grounds. Most countries have both national and regional legal frameworks providing such guarantees but lack effective implementation and accountability (i.e. rule of law), in significant part due to corruption and inadequate education on tolerance and ethical values.

Action by religious as well as other communities is complicated by the vicious circles involved. For ordinary citizens (who for example hold low or mid-level jobs in government or the private sector) refusing to participate in corrupt practices carries high costs that they can ill afford to pay. Where corruption permeates every level of economic activity and interaction with governmental agencies, refusal

to pay a teacher means your child is ignored in school and receives bad grades or may not be able to go to school at all. Refusal to provide gifts to police at the neighborhood station means your home does not receive protection. Refusal to provide a small bribe when submitting an application for services to a government agency can mean that your application languishes at the bottom of the pile for weeks or longer. Refusal to pay a bribe or a portion of one's salary to the boss who hires you can mean not getting a job. This pattern goes from the bottom to the top of the social, political, and economic pyramid. For religious and ethi-

cal teaching to be effective, this dilemma must be addressed. How can, for example, Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic religious values and communities help teachers and communities work together to stop this cycle within their community and beyond?

Corruption, in short, is the enemy of democratic values and systems and of equitable, sustainable, thriving societies. It involves both examples and action by leadership (especially at the top), commitment to rule of law, and embedding relevant mores in society.

Religious Dimensions

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE GLOBAL AND LOCAL ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION BUT FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING THIS POTENTIAL INTO REALITY.

The moral responsibilities and authorities of religious leaders and communities point to central roles in fighting against corruption. This applies at different levels, from contending with personal responsibilities to the tenor and core values of a society and nation. Each religious tradition has teachings that speak to the core values of trust and honesty. These teachings have much in common, as reflected, for example, in the principles set out in the Global

Ethic,¹ and in many common calls of interreligious bodies and gatherings. Courageous religious leaders in exemplary situations speak truth to power about ethical challenges to governance that include corruption.

That said, religious leaders have yet to take on leading roles in modern efforts to address corruption as international and national integrity movements. This is partly because the leadership of anti-corruption movements has become quite secular and technocratic in language and ethos. Moral issues tend to take second place, for reasons that include, for example, a desire to focus more on the systems that make embedded corruption possible than

¹ Hans Kung, John Bowden. A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics. 1998, Oxford University Press.

on personal failings and to avoid the political taint sometimes associated with religious involvement in public affairs. The focus on environmental factors rather than moral failings reflects the multicultural nature of global anti-corruption movements. As a practical matter, close relationships between governments and religious authorities can discourage criticism as can the precarious situation of religious actors in many settings.

The pendulum has swung too far in a technocratic direction. There is a growing recognition that corruption will not be defeated by technical means alone. Ethics, values, and morality must be part of the equation in strategic plans. Religious leaders should have clear roles to play, in speaking truth to those in power and in guiding individuals as they navigate complex choices, for example in how to combat corrupt practices they see or to avoid temptation to fudge rules or seek quick fixes. Religious leaders have central roles in articulating values and norms, including through religious education at many levels. This speaks to the power of inter- and intra-faith alliances that look to the common good across society.

One explanation why some religious leaders are reticent to engage in anti-corruption efforts is awareness that their own organizations may not meet the highest standards of accountability. A tendency to view accounting and reporting as secondary matters is not uncommon. This obviously can and should change: there is no justification for tolerating careless oversight and use of funds and unethical management of personnel. With houses in order, religious institutions are well placed to demand high standards of their governments and leaders.

Each religious tradition has teachings that speak to the core values of trust and honesty

A further challenge is that many corruption issues are complex, with causes and consequences interlinked. Corrupt practices are linked to inequality among nations and within them, to the abuses of the powerful, to the underworld of trafficking and crime, and to concerns that social values overall are dominated by greed and uncontrollable market forces. Conflict and corruption go hand in hand. None of these problems have easy solutions. Debates rage fiercely as to which matters most: mega-corruption –large-scale bribes and theft—or the widespread corruption that saps the trust and time of poor people when they try to obtain health care, succeed in school, or register their child’s birth. Anti-corruption strategies are complex as is judging performance fairly. Measuring progress is difficult; perceptions do not always fit well with objective reality.

Anti-corruption measures can and should be communicated in understandable terms and accountability issues can and should be intelligently addressed. The challenge speaks to the vital importance of partnerships and clear communication.

// MEASURES RELIGIOUS ACTORS CAN TAKE TO ADVANCE ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

Courageous and determined religious leadership can make a difference in turning societies around. Examples of approaches and actions include the following:

- (a) Ethical and moral teachings are a critical part of successful reform and religious teachings can provide strong positive elements in broader anti-corruption strategies. Effective use of pertinent scripture and religious teachings, both for individual traditions and in interfaith contexts, can build commitment and address common misperceptions, for example that cultural differences explain or even justify corrupt practices.
- (b) Women working from religious frameworks are often ignored but can be a powerful force for change.
- (c) “Speaking truth to power” with courage and knowledge can give robust meaning to critical ethical values that bolster honest government, for example, core ethical principles and practices that build trust and social cohesion. Religious education can build religious literacy at all levels and promote civic values consonant with core religious beliefs.
- (d) Tangible topics like extractive industries offer good entry points. Identifying and promoting action on human rights viola-

tions and failures to assure protection of indigenous communities can bolster vigilant monitoring of environmental impact.

- (e) Robust action to stop trafficking of women and children and patterns of abuse are intimately linked to corruption and its underlying drivers and represent a logical platform for religious and interreligious action.
- (f) Close attention to grievances of vulnerable communities is essential as is seeking redress and communicating with families and authorities. This has special relevance in addressing the temptations of extremist ideologies
- (g) Active cooperation with promising integrity programs is feasible, for example at the municipal or community level; youth prizes and support for women’s initiatives are examples. Such efforts highlight what works and encourage promising efforts
- (h) Anti-poverty programs (Bolsa Familiar, for example) can help assure that social and political objectives are met with integrity.
- (i) Information and communication are powerful tools in fighting corruption, and religious communities through communication channels they manage and influence can have an impact. That means educational programs, radio, television, print, and social media.
- (j) Interreligious bodies working together

can focus on understanding patterns of corruption, defining meaningful tools to combat them, and agreeing on specific priority areas for action. With common,

meaningful objectives and indicators of progress, religious communities can contribute more to broader community and national strategies.

Recommendations to G20 Leaders and to Religious Communities

// HOW CAN G20 LEADERS AND ENGAGEMENT GROUPS ADVANCE RELIGIOUS ROLES IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION?

• **Priority should go to assuring full transparency and accountability in use of funds mobilised to respond to the COVID-19 emergencies.** This includes active cooperation between religious communities, global integrity alliances, and institutions like the International Monetary Fund and regional organizations such as the European Union but also SADC and ASEAN.

• **Good governance should be a central and continuing theme of G20 Summits, with specific commitments to action and continuing monitoring.**

• **The issues of land reform and extractive industries,** including fisheries and rainforests, which are of special concern to religious communities, should be a focus of the G20 Communique with commitments to active consultation with pertinent religious groups.

Drafted by Katherine Marshall. Reviewed by Cole Durham/Robert Rotberg

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The pendulum has swung too far in a technocratic direction. There is a growing recognition that corruption will not be defeated by technical means alone.

MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Challenges

// WITH OVER 40 MILLION PEOPLE SUBJECTED TO FORCED LABOUR AND/OR FORCED MARRIAGE IN THE WORLD TODAY, MODERN SLAVERY POSES ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST URGENT CONTEMPORARY HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES.

ILO statistics (2016) indicate that there are an average of 5.4 victims in every 1,000 people. This number more than doubles when considered over a five-year timeframe: between 2012 and 2017, 89 million people were subjected to either forced labour or forced marriage.¹

Of the 40 million victims of modern slavery in 2016, 24.9 million were subjected to forced labour, defined by the ILO as work performed involuntarily and under the threat of a penalty; among these, nearly 4 million adults and 1 million children were working in the commer-

cial sex industry.² Victims may be trafficked domestically or internationally by gangs and organized criminal networks, corporations, small business owners, labour brokers, employers of domestic servants, and victims' own families.³ Some instances of forced labour begin as a voluntary arrangement but devolve into debt bondage, whereby workers are coerced into providing labour in order to pay off the cost of trafficking them. Debt bondage affects half of all victims of forced labour.⁴

// MODERN SLAVERY IS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON, WITH AFRICA, ASIA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN.

Gaps in data collection are significant, nota-

¹ "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage." ILO and Walk Free Foundation. 2017. 10.

² "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage." ILO and Walk Free Foundation. 2017. 9-11.

³ "The Traffickers." National Human Trafficking Hotline. 2020. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/what-human-trafficking/human-trafficking/traffickers>.

⁴ "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage." ILO and Walk Free Foundation. 2017. 9-11.

bly in the Middle East and the Americas, but statistics suggest that modern slavery is most prevalent in Africa, with 7.6 victims per 1,000 people, and in Asia and the Pacific, with 6.1 victims per thousand. Forced labour is most widespread in Asia and the Pacific (4 victims per 1,000 people) and forced marriage in Africa (4.8 victims per 1,000 people). More than 70% of victims of commercial sexual exploitation were living in Asia or the Pacific.⁵ However, no region of the world is exempt from the reach of modern slavery, and traffickers continue to operate clandestinely in many places, where they benefit from a lack of awareness of the issue among everyday citizens.

// A MAJORITY OF VICTIMS ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS.

ILO estimates that women and girls account for 71% of all victims of modern slavery, 99% of those who are in the commercial sex industry, 58% in other sectors of forced labour, and 84% of those subjected to forced marriage.

Children are also among the most vulnerable targets of traffickers, comprising a quarter of all victims of modern slavery, more than a third of victims of forced marriage, and a fifth of victims of commercial sexual exploitation.⁶

// REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

Whether fleeing conflict and persecution in countries such as Myanmar and Venezuela, or searching for new economic opportunities in the United States or European Union, the world's nearly 80 million forcibly displaced people are the frequent targets of traffickers who promise safe passage and employment prospects in order to force victims into unpaid, exploitative labour. Without legal residence status in their host countries, many migrants choose not to seek help from governments or law enforcement for fear of arrest.⁷ In the Gulf States, where residence status is conditional upon the sponsorship of an employer, many documented migrants do not report abuses to state authorities for fear of deportation.⁸

// THE GROWING GLOBAL DEMAND FOR CHEAP GOODS AND COMMERCIAL SEX FUELS MODERN SLAVERY, WHILE THE PROMISE OF HIGH PROFITS AND LOW RISK OF PROSECUTION AND PUNISHMENT EMBOLDENS TRAFFICKERS TO OPERATE WITH IMPUNITY.

Slavery is more lucrative today than at any other

⁵ "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage." ILO and Walk Free Foundation. 2017. 10-11.
⁶ "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage." ILO and Walk Free Foundation. 2017. 10.
⁷ "Figures at a Glance." UNHCR. 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>.
 "Migrants and their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labor." International Organization for Migration. 2019. 9-10. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrants_and_their_vulnerability.pdf
⁸ Cousins, Sophie. "Will Migrant Domestic Workers in the Gulf Ever Be Safe From Abuse?" Women's Advancement Deeply, August 29, 2018. <https://www.newsdeeply.com/womensadvancement/articles/2018/08/29/will-migrant-domestic-workers-in-the-gulf-ever-be-safe-from-abuse>; "Slaving Away: Migrant Labor Exploitation and Human Trafficking in the Gulf." Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain. April 2014. http://adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ADHRB_Slaving-Away-Migrant-Rights-and-Human-Trafficking-the-the-Gulf-Web-Pre-Publication.pdf

time in history, generating US\$150 billion annually.⁹ Sex trafficking accounts for half of all profits of human trafficking, with the average victim generating US\$36,000 a year.¹⁰ Extreme poverty, violent conflict, and lack of access to education and legitimate employment make victims easy targets of traffickers and fuel rates of forced marriage.¹¹

// MODERN SLAVERY IMPEDES GLOBAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

Forced labour not only reduces opportunities for legal employment, but it creates unfair competition for law-abiding businesses whose profit margins are considerably lower than those of enterprises relying on forced labour.¹² Moreover, victims of modern slavery typically cannot send remittances back home, a major hindrance to economic growth in nations in poorer nations.¹³ Those who escape their conditions may face lifelong stigma and marginalisation which, along with a lack of legal work history, can reduce their employment prospects, fueling poverty and hampering economic growth.

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The COVID-19 Crisis

// THE ONGOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS EXACERBATED THE PLIGHT OF VICTIMS OF MODERN SLAVERY AND HEIGHTENED THE RISK OF TRAFFICKING AMONG VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

Regulations intended to reduce the spread of the virus have had an adverse impact on victims of modern slavery. Travel restrictions have pre-

vented people from returning home and have led migrants and refugees to take on even riskier methods of travel.¹⁴ Lockdown and physical distancing measures have likewise heightened the risks of trafficking, exploitation, and abuse as victims are trapped in close quarters with perpetrators.¹⁵ Many trafficked people live in overcrowded, unsanitary accommodations in which they face a heightened risk of contracting

⁹ "ILO says forced labour generates annual profits of US\$ 150 billion." ILO News. May 20, 2014. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_243201/lang--en/index.htm; "How Trafficking Exists Today." UNICEF USA. January 6, 2016. <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/how-trafficking-exists-today/29715>.
¹⁰ Kelly, Annie. "Human life is more expendable: why slavery has never made more money." The Guardian. July 31, 2017. [the-guardian.com/global-development/2017/jul/31/human-life-is-more-expendable-why-slavery-has-never-made-more-money](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jul/31/human-life-is-more-expendable-why-slavery-has-never-made-more-money)
¹¹ "How Trafficking Exists Today." UNICEF USA. January 6, 2016. <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/how-trafficking-exists-today/29715>.
¹² Datta, Monti Narayan, and Kevin Bales. "Slavery Is Bad for Business: Analyzing the Impact of Slavery on National Economies." The Brown Journal of World Affairs 19, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2013): 205-23. <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1027&context=polisci-faculty-publications>
¹³ Lillie, Michelle. "The Dirty Economics of Human Trafficking." Human Trafficking Search. 2013. <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/the-dirty-economics-of-human-trafficking/>
¹⁴ "COVID-19 crisis putting human trafficking victims at risk of further exploitation, experts warn." UN News. May 6, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063342>; "COVID-19 impact on migrant smuggling and human trafficking." INTERPOL. June 11, 2020. <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/COVID-19-impact-on-migrant-smuggling-and-human-trafficking>
¹⁵ "Coronavirus lockdowns 'conducive' to human trafficking." Al Jazeera. June 16, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/coronavirus-lockdowns-conducive-human-trafficking-200616141741912.html>



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and transmitting the virus.¹⁶ Law enforcement officials tasked with upholding public health measures have at times leveraged punitive measures against victims of modern slavery, especially sex workers, through arrest, deportation, and compulsory health examinations.¹⁷

As governments divert law enforcement resources to enforcing lockdown measures and civil society organizations scale back their services in response to budget cuts, victims of modern slavery face greater obstacles to escape their circumstances, seek redress, and cope with the long-lasting trauma of their past experiences. NGOs have had to cut back their rescue missions, emergency shelters, in-person counselling services, legal assistance services, and other support structures for victims, with investigations and legal proceedings on hold in many places.¹⁸

The lockdown has put children in particular at a higher risk of forced labour, early marriage, and online sexual exploitation.¹⁹ As millions of children are forced to stay home from school due to lockdown measures, they are increasingly vulnerable to online sexual predators at a time when demand for child pornography has increased by up to 30% in some EU countries due to the lockdown.²⁰ More children are forced to beg in the streets for food and money, heightening their risk of exploitation.²¹

The economic toll of the COVID-19 crisis on the global economy has also affected millions of forced labourers adversely, who were already working under exploitative circumstances. As businesses face pressures to increase their production in order to compete, their workers face a heightened risk of ex-

¹⁶ "COVID-19 makes Gulf countries' abuse of migrant workers impossible to ignore." Amnesty International. April 30, 2020. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2020/04/covid19-makes-gulf-countries-abuse-of-migrant-workers-impossible-to-ignore/>

¹⁷ Giammarinaro, Maria Grazia. "COVID-19 Position Paper: The impact and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficked and exploited persons." June 2020. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Trafficking/COVID-19-Impact-trafficking.pdf>

¹⁸ "COVID-19 crisis putting human trafficking victims at risk of further exploitation, experts warn." UN News, May 6, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063342>

¹⁹ Wagner, Livia and Thi Hoang. "Aggravating Circumstances: How coronavirus impacts human trafficking." Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. May 2020. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Aggravating-circumstances-How-coronavirus-impacts-human-trafficking-GITOC-1.pdf>

²⁰ Wagner, Livia and Thi Hoang. "Aggravating Circumstances: How coronavirus impacts human trafficking." Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. May 2020. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Aggravating-circumstances-How-coronavirus-impacts-human-trafficking-GITOC-1.pdf>

²¹ "COVID-19 Pushes Victims of Child Trafficking and Exploitation into Further Isolation: Save the Children." Save The Children, July 29, 2020. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/covid-19-pushed-victims-child-trafficking-and-exploitation-further-isolation-save-children#>

²² "COVID-19 crisis putting human trafficking victims at risk of further exploitation, experts warn." UN News, May 6, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063342>

ploitation.²² This is especially true in industries that produce healthcare products such as masks and hospital gear, where instances of forced labour had been documented well before the outbreak.²³ The slowdown of production in some industries has meant that forced labourers have been unable to work to repay "debts" to their traffickers.²⁴ Millions of workers have been laid off and forced to search for

alternate sources of employment, exposing many to the risk of human trafficking. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking.²⁵ As COVID-related restrictions ease, there is likely to be an increase in the global occurrence of forced labour due to renewed demand for workers and even greater economic vulnerability among the world's poorest populations.²⁶

The bottom line

// DESPITE COMMITMENTS BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES TO COMBAT MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING, EFFECTIVE ANTI-SLAVERY EFFORTS CAN BE SEEN AS QUITE LIMITED.

The US Department of State estimates that there were a mere 11,841 prosecutions and 9,548 convictions globally for trafficking-related crimes in 2019.²⁷ International treaties face major implementation challenges, and better

coordination and cooperation among state governments and law enforcement agencies are urgently needed to prosecute perpetrators who operate internationally. Many countries still lack anti-trafficking laws or the means to enforce existing laws effectively.²⁸ In some cases, public officials are themselves involved in the trafficking process or may refuse to intervene because of the potential political cost; furthermore, victims may be unwilling to cooperate with the criminal justice system for fear of retribution by their traffickers.²⁹ Even in those countries that actively enforce anti-trafficking

²² Wagner, Livia and Thi Hoang. "Aggravating Circumstances: How coronavirus impacts human trafficking." Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. May 2020. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Aggravating-circumstances-How-coronavirus-impacts-human-trafficking-GITOC-1.pdf>

²³ "Why Modern Slavery Risks Should Be Top of Mind for Businesses during COVID-19." Business for Social Responsibility, July 1, 2020. <https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/blog-view/why-modern-slavery-risks-should-be-top-of-mind-for-businesses-covid-19>

²⁴ Wagner, Livia and Thi Hoang. "Aggravating Circumstances: How coronavirus impacts human trafficking." Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. May 2020. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Aggravating-circumstances-How-coronavirus-impacts-human-trafficking-GITOC-1.pdf>

²⁵ "Why Modern Slavery Risks Should Be Top of Mind for Businesses during COVID-19." Business for Social Responsibility, July 1, 2020. <https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/blog-view/why-modern-slavery-risks-should-be-top-of-mind-for-businesses-covid-19>

²⁶ Wagner, Livia and Thi Hoang. "Aggravating Circumstances: How coronavirus impacts human trafficking." Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. May 2020. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Aggravating-circumstances-How-coronavirus-impacts-human-trafficking-GITOC-1.pdf>

²⁷ "Trafficking in Persons Report: 20th Edition." U.S. Department of State. 2020. 43. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf>

²⁸ "Human Trafficking FAQs." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2020. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/faqs.html>

²⁹ "Human Rights and Human Trafficking." Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2014. 46. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS36_en.pdf

measures, these measures may address only a small part of the problem; some EU governments have focused primarily on dismantling

criminal networks and prosecuting traffickers, with far fewer resources going toward identifying and assisting victims.³⁰

The Global Response Thus Far

// NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOLS RECOGNISE THE GRAVITY OF MODERN SLAVERY, THE CLOSE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TRAFFICKING AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, AND THE NEED FOR IMMEDIATE, COMPREHENSIVE ACTION ON THIS ISSUE.

Target 8.7 of the SDGs calls for the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking, with an end to all forms of child labour by 2025.³¹ The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2000; its chief aims are to prevent trafficking, protect and support victims, and promote cooperation among member states to form a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy. Implementation of the Protocol in member states remains a major challenge, however.³² Other UN treaties closely tied to the

issue of trafficking include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (2000), the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2000), and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016). The ILO adopted conventions against forced labour in 1930 and 1957, and against child labour in 1999.

// INTERGOVERNMENTAL RESPONSES TO MODERN SLAVERY ADDRESS NUMEROUS FACETS OF THE ISSUE, WITH A FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING LEGAL MECHANISMS, ENFORCING EXISTING LAWS AGAINST TRAFFICKING, AND PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS.

The European Commission's Anti-Trafficking Coordinator works to align policies and promote collaboration on the issue of trafficking

across EU member states and with non-EU parties.³³ The Coordinator has worked with member states to push for tougher legal measures against human trafficking, including the criminalisation of individuals who knowingly use the services of a victim of human trafficking. The UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) works with governments, academic institutions, civil society, and the private sector to combat human trafficking transnationally, while the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children directly supports victims of trafficking through humanitarian, legal, and financial aid.³⁴ In 2016, the ILO and Ford Foundation launched Alliance 8.7, a partnership of over 200 governments, international and regional organizations, workers' and employers' groups, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders committed to strengthening coordination and collaboration to achieve Goal Target 8.7 against slavery and trafficking.³⁵ Despite their considerable contributions, these and other efforts largely lack enforcement power, relying on the voluntary cooperation of member organizations and governments. Local civil society organizations in some countries have raised concerns that policymakers lack the political will to enforce anti-trafficking legislation and introduce new laws, representing a major obstacle to effective change.³⁶

// SINCE THE 2000S, SEVERAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND PRIVATE FUNDS HAVE TAKEN ON THE FIGHT AGAINST MODERN SLAVERY.

Several groups have pioneered new approaches to the issue, such as by relying on modern technology to improve reporting mechanisms and focusing directly on the economic causes of trafficking. The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS), a private-public partnership established in 2016, works to end modern slavery by making it economically unprofitable; the Fund leads interventions to incentivise ethical business practices that do not rely on forced labour, raises awareness of the economic cost of modern slavery and the benefits of eliminating it, and helps victims find alternative forms of employment.³⁷ Walk Free, an initiative of the Australia-based Minderoo Foundation, publishes the Global Slavery Index, which estimates prevalence of modern slavery around the world, highlights regions and sectors that are particularly affected, and profiles government responses in individual countries.³⁸ The Freedom Fund, a private donor fund established in 2013, finances local organizations that work to eradicate slavery in heavily affected sectors and countries.³⁹ Stop the Traffik, a UK-based organization founded in 2006, works with governments, law enforcement, civil society groups, and businesses to run social media campaigns that raise awareness of human traf-

³³ "Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings." European Commission. 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/node/4598_en

³⁴ "About." United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. 2016. <http://www.ungift.org/about/>; "The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2020. https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking-fund/human-trafficking-fund_about.html

³⁵ "The Alliance." Alliance 8.7.2018. <https://www.alliance87.org/the-alliance/>

³⁶ "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council." European Commission, December 3, 2018. 7. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_com-2018-777-report_en.pdf

³⁷ "Our Approach." Global Fund to End Modern Slavery. 2020. <https://www.gfems.org/our-approach> "The Global Slavery Index 2018." Walk Free Foundation. 2018.

³⁸ "The Global Slavery Index 2018." Walk Free Foundation. 2018. https://downloads.globalslaveryindex.org/ephemeral/GSI-2018_FNL_190828_CO_DIGITAL_P-1597307571.pdf

³⁹ "What We Do." The Freedom Fund. 2020. <https://freedomfund.org/about/what-we-do/>

³⁰ "Legislation and the Situation Concerning Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in EU Member States." International Centre for Migration Policy Development. 2009. 13. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/doc_centre/crime/docs/evaluation_eu_ms_thb_legislation_en.pdf

³¹ "Sustainable Development Goals." UNODC Southeast Asia and Pacific. 2020. <https://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/sustainable-development-goals.html>

³² "Human Trafficking FAQs." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2020. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/faqs.html>

ficking; its STOP APP, released in 2016, enables users to report incidents of human trafficking they have experienced or witnessed. In 2018, Stop the Traffik launched the Traffik Analysis Hub, which combines data sets from governments, law enforcement, NGOs, and private sector groups in order to facilitate the ex-

change of information to strengthen anti-trafficking efforts.⁴⁰ The U.S.-based Polaris Project operates the National Human Trafficking Hotline, which contributes data to the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative, a joint effort of Polaris, the International Organization for Migration, and several other groups.

Religious Responses

// FAITH ACTORS PLAY VITAL ROLES IN PREVENTING MODERN SLAVERY BY SHAPING CULTURAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ISSUE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS AND TAILORING THEIR RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT.

With their long tradition of providing education, healthcare, and social services, particularly to migrants, women, and other vulnerable populations, religious institutions help strengthen community structures that should serve as bulwarks against modern slavery. At the same time, faith leaders are often a trusted resource for victims of trafficking, who commonly confide in them as a first step in seeking help. Religious groups' intimate acquaintance with the root causes of trafficking within many local communities make them valuable stakeholders in policy discussions, while their global networks put them in a strategic position to extend anti-trafficking bor-

ders across borders and cultures.⁴¹ Their moral authority and close relationships with community members enable them to shape cultural attitudes to condemn slavery and trafficking. In short, religious communities can be powerful advocates and natural allies in integrated, multisector approaches.

// OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DECADES, MODERN SLAVERY HAS BECOME AN ISSUE OF INCREASING PRIORITY IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, WITH PROMINENT FAITH LEADERS ACTIVELY DENOUNCING TRAFFICKING, CONVENING INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS AND TASK FORCES ON THE ISSUE, AND COORDINATING ANTI-SLAVERY EFFORTS WITHIN THEIR RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS.

⁴⁰ "Stop the Traffik 2017-2018 Report." Stop the Traffik. 2018. <https://www.stopthetraffik.org/download/2017-2018-report-2/?wpdmdl=14848&refresh=5f34fe591e3501597308505>
⁴¹ Leary, Mary. "Religious Organizations as Partners in the Global and Local Fights Against Human Trafficking." CUA Columbus School of Law Legal Studies Research Paper. 2018. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3176551; Leary, Mary. "Religion and Human Trafficking." Caritas in Veritate Foundation, Blueprint Series. 2015. <http://www.fciv.org/downloads/Mary%20Leary%20Religion%20and%20Human%20Trafficking.pdf>.



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Pope Francis has made the issue of modern slavery central to his Pontificate, decrying trafficking as "a scourge that wounds the dignity of our weakest brothers and sisters."⁴² In December 2014, he hosted representatives from the Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian faiths at a meeting that culminated in the signing of the Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery.⁴³ Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, have likewise focused on modern slavery as a major human rights issue for the Orthodox and Anglican Churches, launching the Task Force on Modern Slavery at an ecumenical Forum in February 2017, which has since become an annual event.⁴⁴ Numerous other religious groups have taken a strong

stance against human trafficking, including the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Salvation Army.⁴⁵

// NUMEROUS LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL FAITH-INSPIRED GROUPS ARE DEDICATED TO COMBATTING THE ROOT CAUSES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, ASSISTING VICTIMS, AND RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE ISSUE.

International anti-trafficking networks include COATNET, which coordinates Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox anti-trafficking efforts in nearly

⁴² "Pope Francis: Trafficking a scourge against human dignity." Vatican News, August 1, 2020. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-08/pope-francis-human-trafficking-scourge-against-dignity.html>

⁴³ "Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery." Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences. 2014. <http://www.endslavery.va/content/endslavery/en/events/declaration.html>.

⁴⁴ "Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Host International Forum on Modern Slavery and the Arts." Ecumenical Patriarchate, October 9, 2019. <https://www.patriarchate.org/-/ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-to-host-international-forum-on-modern-slavery-and-the-arts>.

⁴⁵ "Human Trafficking, Resolution On." Central Conference of American Rabbis. June 2004. <https://www.ccar-net.org/ccar-resolutions/human-trafficking-resolution-on/>; "Opposing Modern Slavery." The Salvation Army International. 2020. <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/modernslavery/>; "Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking." The Salvation Army International. May 2020. https://s3.amazonaws.com/cache.salvationarmy.org/ae2261b4-a199-4f60-8289-7310dfeadc57_Modern+Slavery+Human+Trafficking+-+May+2020.pdf.

40 countries; the Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAAST), an alliance of Christian organizations, which counts such churches as the Salvation Army among its members; and Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE), with members in over 31 European countries.⁴⁶ Talitha Kum, an organization of Catholic women religious, works to address the systemic causes of trafficking, protect vulnerable populations, and rehabilitate and reintegrate survivors in more than 90 countries.⁴⁷ These international networks are complemented by local and national efforts, including Chab Dai in Cambodia, the Clewer Initiative in the United Kingdom, and T'ruah in the United States.⁴⁸ In addition, large transnational faith-inspired organizations (FIOs) such as Caritas, HIAS, Islamic Relief, Lutheran World Federation, and World Vision have anti-trafficking and victim assistance initiatives through their local branch offices, particularly in poorer nations.⁴⁹

// SECULAR-RELIGIOUS PARTNERSHIPS BRING RELIGIOUS VOICES INTO POLICY DISCUSSIONS AND ENABLE THE EXCHANGE OF RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE AMONG FAITH GROUPS, CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS, GOVERNMENTS, AND PRIVATE COMPANIES.

Religious communities can be powerful advocates and natural allies in integrated, multisector approaches

The Santa Marta Group, established in 2014 by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, brings together Catholic leaders, law enforcement, and international organizations from over 35 countries to share best practices and develop a victim-centered approach to anti-trafficking efforts.⁵⁰ Relationships fostered through initiatives such as these have led to on-the-ground collaboration between law enforcement officials and religious figures; in England, religious sisters have accompanied police officers on raids on brothels in order to win the trust of sex trafficking victims.⁵¹ FIOs such as the International Justice Mission (IJM) work with governments to strengthen anti-trafficking legislation and improve enforcement of existing laws. The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) addresses root causes of trafficking by working with companies to ensure that supply chains do not rely on forced labour.⁵²

⁴⁶ "About Us." COATNET. 2020. <https://www.coatnet.org/about-us/>; "Mission and Values." Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking. 2020. <https://faatinternational.org/about-us/our-mission/>; "About Us." RENATE: Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation. 2020. <https://www.renate-europe.net/about-us/>
⁴⁷ "Talitha Kum." 2019. <https://www.talithakum.info/>.
⁴⁸ "Our Story." Chab Dai. 2020. <https://chabdai.org/about/>; "About Us." The Clewer Initiative. 2020. <https://www.theclewerinitiative.org/about-us/>; "Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking." T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. 2020. <https://www.truah.org/campaign/slavery-and-trafficking/>.
⁴⁹ "What We Do." Islamic Relief Worldwide. 2020. <https://www.islamic-relief.org/category/what-we-do/protecting-life-and-dignity/>; "Interfaith network to counter human trafficking launched in Nigeria." The Lutheran World Federation, August 2, 2019. <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/interfaith-network-counter-human-trafficking-launched-nigeria>.
⁵⁰ "Santa Marta Group: Church and Law Enforcement Combatting Modern Slavery." 2020. <http://santamartagroup.com/>.
⁵¹ Leary, Mary. "Religion and Human Trafficking." Caritas in Veritate Foundation, Blueprint Series. 2015. <http://www.fciv.org/downloads/Mary%20Leary:%20Religion%20and%20Human%20Trafficking.pdf>
⁵² "Our Work." International Justice Mission. 2020. <https://www.ijm.org/our-work>. "Statement of Principles & Recommended Practices for Confronting Human Trafficking & Modern Slavery." Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. 2013. https://www.iccr.org/sites/default/files/resources_attachments/2013ICCR_HTPPrinciples_FINAL112013.pdf.

Looking Ahead: Recommendations

Effective responses to modern slavery must take into account the economic, social, cultural, and legal forces that cause and perpetuate the problem, while also addressing the specific regional, national and local contexts in which trafficking and exploitation occur. Prosecution of traffickers is only one aspect of a comprehensive response, which also need to confront the underlying economic and social contexts in which modern slavery flourishes. The following proposals focus on feasible actions to address the most urgent dimensions of what should be seen as a global crisis.

1. Give deliberate priority to victims of modern slavery in anti-trafficking efforts. A comprehensive approach to modern slavery requires that victims' human rights be placed in the foreground of prevention and prosecution efforts. G20 countries should commit themselves explicitly to measures establishing, improving, and publicising reporting mechanisms such as confidential hotlines, particularly in known target areas for recruiters. Training for law enforcement, public employees, and humanitarian aid workers on effective assistance to victims of modern slavery is feasible and important. G20 leaders should consider ongoing cooperative mechanisms involving engaged groups (national law enforcement agencies, intergovernmental agencies, NGOs, and international FIOs) to ensure continued action.

2. Reinforce actions to eradicate modern slavery by focusing explicitly on global and national supply chains. Forced labour is an all-too-common feature of global supply chains. G20 governments should review their public procurement processes so as to ensure, proactively, that these do not rely on forced labour. G20 leaders should advocate for and support the establishment of an independent, international agency that monitors supply chains and educates governments, businesses, and citizens on the issue. With par religious authorities, private sector,

employers' and workers' organizations, and relevant civil society organizations as partners, governments should commit themselves publicly to improve accountability mechanisms that monitor supply chains and educate citizens to recognise and intervene in cases of forced labour.

3. Bolster prevention efforts by addressing economic conditions, supporting vulnerable populations, and raising awareness of the issue. As part of their COVID-19 response, G20 countries should commit themselves to support businesses that rely on legal and ethical labour in order to prevent shifts toward informal and/or forced labour, and develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure that such support materialises. Religious actors should be consulted and engaged in developing and implementing appropriate accountability mechanisms. National policies that extend rights to labourers in the informal economy can form part of strategies to curtail exploitation of workers. Awareness campaigns should aim to ensure that potential victims and bystanders can better recognise the causes and signs of exploitation. Initiatives addressed to at-risk populations can serve as an important bulwark against trafficking.

4. Strengthen anti-trafficking enforcement and collaborative efforts, especially for trafficking occurring on the internet. Deliberate action, taken in collaboration with civil society groups, including religious actors, is needed to contain the worrying online spread of child pornography and to prosecute perpetrators. G20 leaders should call upon national governments to allocate funds to identify and prosecute traffickers and to introduce new laws that address the changing landscape of trafficking on the internet.

5. Include victims of modern slavery in coronavirus response and recovery plans. With heightened risks to vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 crisis, representatives need to be present in policy deliberations that aim to mitigate and recover from the crisis. All residents of G20 countries, regardless of legal status, should be assured proper access to healthcare. Undocumented individuals who seek treatment should not be penalised and/or deported. Regulatory mechanisms need to

address any potential upsurge of forced labour following the pandemic. Pertinent labour issues should be integrated in pandemic preparedness plans both by individual governments and by the G20 overall.

6. Strengthen data collection mechanisms. A stronger statistical base is needed to grasp the scale of modern slavery on the local, regional, and global level, as well as the impact of anti-slavery initiatives. Databases such as the UN's Human Trafficking Knowledge Portal, the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative, and the Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index are critical to shaping anti-trafficking policy, especially with regards to vulnerable groups such as women, children, and migrants and refugees. G20 leaders should allocate funds for data collection in their countries and, if they have not done so already, establish a government office responsible for recording and analysing this data. In addition, government and civil society actors can support regional and international databases by assisting in data collection efforts.

7. Establish clear continuing mechanisms with the G20 Interfaith Association to pursue action plans involving religious leaders and faith-linked initiatives towards comprehensive responses to trafficking. Building proactively on the experience and assets of faith actors offers significant promise to strengthen modern slavery strategies as they offer and specific means that governments and other civil society actors lack. The institutional capacity of large religious bodies allows for collaboration across borders and access to critical areas. Religious groups' close work with at-risk populations such as refugees and migrants positions them well to engage with policymakers. First steps would include sharing resources and expertise, and assuring adequate funding for priority activities.

Draft by: Luisa Banchoff; Reviewed by: Sister Denise Coghlan/ Kevin Hyland/ Mark Lagon/ Juan Navarro Floria/ Cole Durham/ Mohammed Abu-Nimer/ Katherine Marshall.

INTERFAITH ACTION TO PROTECT RAINFORESTS

Challenges

THE COVID-19 CRISIS HIGHLIGHTS THE URGENT NEED FOR G20 LEADERS TO SUPPORT AND PROTECT TROPICAL RAINFORESTS. The 2020 G20 Presidency Agenda calls on G20 leaders to “lead the international community in working toward minimising land degradation and deforestation.”¹ Proactive partnerships with religious institutions offer significant opportunity to enhance awareness and spur action.

Tropical rainforests play crucial roles in mitigating global climate change, preserving biodiversity, and supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of indigenous people. Destruction of these forests, primarily for economic gain, poses an existential threat to the future global climate: the process of deforestation emits billions of tons of carbon dioxide each year and makes way for carbon-emitting industries, and the loss of tropical tree coverage reduces forests' natural capacity to absorb

carbon. Indigenous populations are disproportionately affected by the destruction of land and natural resources, with significant repercussions for their physical health, economic wellbeing, and human rights. Disappearance of some of the world's most diverse ecosystems has ramifications for global health, increasing opportunities for contact between humans and virus host animals.

Among the local, national, and global efforts to combat deforestation, faith-linked initiatives stand out for their capacity to speak to the moral imperative of protecting the environment. Religious leaders including Pope Francis and interfaith networks such as the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) play pivotal roles in directing global attention to the challenges facing the world's rainforests and in empowering local communities to pursue sustainable solutions. By engaging with religious commu-

¹ “Overview of Saudi Arabia's 2020 G20 Presidency,” December 2019. <https://g20.org/en/g20/Documents/Presidency%20Agenda.pdf>

nities and organizations, G20 leaders and national governments can strengthen their own response to the numerous challenges posed by deforestation.

Deforestation is occurring at a record rate, posing an existential threat to wildlife, indigenous populations, and natural carbon control systems that have been essential in mitigating the effects of climate change over the past decades. 2019 was a record year for deforestation in tropical rainforests across the world; in the Amazon alone, close to 10,000 square kilometers of forest were cleared between August 2018 and July 2019, an increase of nearly 30 percent over the previous year.² Deforestation is not a recent problem; high rates date back several decades: 1.3 million square kilometers of forest were cut down between 1990 and 2016. Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa have been most affected, losing 10 and 12 percent of their forest area during this period, respectively.³ Today, deforestation rates are highest in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea. Weak governance, inefficient land use, and the predominance of large-scale logging and agriculture industries play significant roles in patterns of destruction.

Habitat loss poses major threats to indigenous populations, including reduced income, health risks, and declining access to food and water sources. Over 400 million indigenous people around the world depend partially or com-

Deforestation is occurring at a record rate, posing an existential threat to wildlife, indigenous populations, and natural carbon control systems that have been essential in mitigating the effects of climate change over the past decades

pletely on rainforests for their livelihoods.⁴ Deforestation exacerbates already disproportionate levels of discrimination these populations face when accessing education, healthcare, the labor market, and legal and political representation. Loss of valuable natural resources and displacement of forest communities result from large-scale infrastructure projects such as roads, pipelines, and dams.⁵ Under Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, mining, logging, petroleum, and hydrocarbons companies have seized indigenous lands in the Amazon with few legal consequences.⁶ Indigenous communities also contend with rollbacks on land rights: new laws in Brazil and Indonesia make it more difficult for native populations to legally claim their ancestral lands, while the creation

of conservation areas in Central America has restricted their ability to cultivate crops.⁷ Indigenous activists who speak out against the commercial exploitation of their land risk violent retaliation. The violent murder of an indigenous leader by a group of miners in northern Brazil in July 2019 was one among more than 300 killings recorded by Brazil's Pastoral Land Commission since 2009; the majority of them go uninvestigated and unprosecuted.⁸

Shrinking forests exacerbate the effects of global climate change, contribute to unstable and extreme weather, and may permanently alter the natural landscape. Tropical tree coverage is one of the planet's most effective natural carbon absorption mechanisms, and rampant deforestation greatly reduces trees' ability to capture carbon. Tropical rainforests absorb only two-thirds the amount they did in the 1990s. A study released in early 2020 suggests that the Amazon may produce more carbon than it absorbs as early as the mid-2030s, with other tropical forests following suit in subsequent decades.⁹ Tropical tree coverage also plays vital roles in distributing humid air and generating rainfall near in regions both near and far; consequently, a reduction in tree coverage could result in more unpredictable and extreme global

weather patterns.¹⁰ Deforestation can also lead to irreversible habitat change; scientists predict that if losses in the Amazon, currently estimated at 15 to 17 percent of total tree coverage, reach 25 percent, the forest will dry out and transition into a savannah ecosystem, with drastic effects on local wildlife.¹¹ Tropical forests in Borneo, Sumatra, and the Congo Basin could undergo similar changes.¹²

Declining biodiversity and increasing urbanisation on cleared land are linked to the spread of emerging infectious diseases (EIDs). Viruses such as COVID-19, SARS, Ebola, Zika, and HIV were first transmitted to humans from wild animals; as deforestation eliminates natural barriers between human and animal populations, there are increased risks of more of these viruses emerging. Commercial activities such as logging, mining, and construction accelerate the rate of species decline, which in turn enables common virus host animals such as bats and rodents to flourish.¹³ Urbanisation in previously pristine forest areas further heightens the risk of transmission as proximity between wild animals and humans shrinks.

⁷ Dholakia, Nazish and Juliana Nnoka-Mewanu. "Interview: Deforestation threatens Indonesia's Indigenous Peoples." Human Rights Watch, September 22, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/22/interview-deforestation-threatens-indonesias-indigenous-peoples> ; "Amazonian Indigenous Peoples Territories and Their Forests Related to Climate Change: Analyses and Policy Options." Environmental Defense Fund, October 2017. 21. <http://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/indigenous-territories-barrier-to-deforestation.pdf> ; Mathiesen, Karl. "Indigenous land rights key to stopping deforestation in Central America." The Guardian, December 9, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/dec/09/indigenous-land-rights-key-to-stopping-deforestation-in-central-america>

⁸ Londoño, Ernesto. "Miners Kill Indigenous Leader in Brazil During Invasion of Protected Land." The New York Times, July 27, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/27/world/americas/brazil-miners-amapa.html> ; "Rainforest Mafias: How Violence and Impunity Fuel Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon." Human Rights Watch, September 17, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/09/17/rainforest-mafias/how-violence-and-impunity-fuel-deforestation-brazils-amazon>

⁹ Harvey, Fiona. "Tropical forests losing their ability to absorb carbon, study finds." The Guardian, March 4, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/04/tropical-forests-losing-their-ability-to-absorb-carbon-study-finds>

¹⁰ Butler, Rhett. "Climatic Role of Forests." Mongabay News, July 22, 2012. <https://rainforests.mongabay.com/0906.htm>

¹¹ Irfan, Umair. "Brazil's Amazon rainforest destruction is at its highest rate in more than a decade." Vox, November 18, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2019/11/18/20970604/amazon-rainforest-2019-brazil-burning-deforestation-bolsonaro>

¹² Butler, Rhett. "Rainforests in 2020: 10 things to watch." Mongabay News, December 29, 2019. <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/12/rainforests-in-2020-10-things-to-watch/>

¹³ Vidal, John. "Destroyed Habitat Creates the Perfect Conditions for Coronavirus to Emerge." Scientific American, March 18, 2020. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/destroyed-habitat-creates-the-perfect-conditions-for-coronavirus-to-emerge/>

² Irfan, Umair. "Brazil's Amazon rainforest destruction is at its highest rate in more than a decade." Vox, November 18, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2019/11/18/20970604/amazon-rainforest-2019-brazil-burning-deforestation-bolsonaro>

³ Khokhar, Tariq and Mahyar Eshragh Tabary. "Five forest figures for the International Day of Forests." World Bank Blogs, March 21, 2016. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/five-forest-figures-international-day-forests>

⁴ Blazey, Patricia. "Deforestation, climate change and indigenous people." The Asia Dialogue, October 2, 2019. <https://theasiadialogue.com/2019/10/02/deforestation-climate-change-and-indigenous-people/>

⁵ "Indigenous Rights in the Amazon." Pachamama Alliance. <https://www.pachamama.org/indigenous-rights>

⁶ "The World's Best Forest Guardians: Indigenous Peoples." Rainforest Alliance, October 11, 2019. <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/articles/indigenous-peoples-the-best-forest-guardians>

The Global Response Thus Far

SINCE THE 1990S, WORLD LEADERS HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THE NEED TO ADDRESS DEFORESTATION IN NUMEROUS MULTINATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND INITIATIVES, INCLUDING IN TWO OF THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS): GOAL 13 (COMBATTING CLIMATE CHANGE) AND GOAL 15 (PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY). Regular international meetings since 1995, under UN auspices, of the Conference of the Parties (COP) focus multisectoral attention on climate issues including deforestation. The paragraphs below give an overview of legal, financial, and economic interventions by governments and NGOs to address deforestation.

International climate resolutions acknowledge the value of protecting tropical rainforests, but they face an uphill battle in meeting their goals. The New York Declaration on Forests and UN Strategic Plan for Forests, adopted in 2014 and 2017, respectively, both set ambitious goals to halt deforestation by 2030, and the UN Strategic Plan calls for a three percent increase (120 million hectares) in forest areas worldwide.¹⁴ Despite progress in individual nations, overall deforestation rates are rising; the rate of tree

coverage loss increased 43 percent between 2014 and 2019.¹⁵ This increase threatens the viability of goals set out by the UN Strategic Plan to eradicate extreme poverty among forest-dependent populations and increase protected and conserved forest areas around the world.¹⁶ Carbon emissions from deforestation threaten the Paris Agreement's goal to limit the rise in global temperature in the 21st century to two degrees Celsius.

Results-based financing is a promising strategy to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable development in rainforest countries. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)'s Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program offers financial incentives to developing countries that reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and invest instead in sustainable development methods. The UN-REDD Programme assists national governments and indigenous and forest communities in rainforest countries to meet the criteria for REDD+ payments.¹⁷ Through REDD+, Norway made a payment of approximately \$20 million to Indonesia in 2019 after the latter re-

¹⁴ "United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/un-strategic-plan-for-forests-2030/index.html>

¹⁵ Harvey, Fiona. "World losing area of forest the size of the UK, report finds." The Guardian, September 12, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/12/deforestation-world-losing-area-forest-size-of-uk-each-year-report-finds>

¹⁶ "Global Forest Goals and Targets of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019. <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Global-Forest-Goals-booklet-Apr-2019.pdf>

¹⁷ "About REDD+." UNREDD. <https://www.unredd.net/about/what-is-redd-plus.html>

duced deforestation rates over the previous years.¹⁸ The Green Climate Fund, established in 2010 by the UNFCCC, likewise contributes to sustainable financing by supporting more than 100 greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience projects in developing countries, with nearly USD \$10 billion pledged in 2019.¹⁹

Consumers and governments can play significant roles in pressuring companies to abandon ecologically harmful agricultural methods. Recent measures, such as the EU's 2019 ban on subsidies for biofuels derived from palm oil,

have the potential to shift global industry away from unsustainable land use.²⁰ Consumers and environmental activists have likewise put pressure on the Brazilian beef industry to refrain from sourcing cattle from newly deforested land; however, supply chains remain opaque and commitments by agricultural companies to prioritise sustainability are difficult to enforce. If implemented on a large scale, certain lifestyle changes, such as switching to a diet that relies less heavily on meat and dairy, can help reduce demand for cleared land in the Amazon and other rainforest regions.

Religious Responses

WITH MORAL AUTHORITY AND ABILITY TO SHAPE COMMUNITY VALUES, RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND INSTITUTIONS ARE WELL POSITIONED TO INFLUENCE LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL ACTION ON DEFORESTATION, LAND PROTECTION, AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS. THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS HIGHLIGHT FAITH-LINKED ENGAGEMENT ON THESE ISSUES.

Interfaith coalitions are actively engaged in preserving intact rainforests, advocating against deforestation, and promoting indigenous rights.

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI), launched in 2017 and endorsed by the Religions for Peace World Assembly in August 2019, brings leaders from major world religions together with indigenous leaders, climate scientists, and representatives of NGOs to address deforestation in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia. IRI launched country programs in Colombia, Peru, and DRC in 2019 and in Indonesia in early 2020; IRI workshops and trainings for religious, interfaith, and indigenous leaders coordinate efforts that protect natural resources and

¹⁸ Taylor, Michael. "Norway starts payments to Indonesia for cutting forest emissions." Reuters, February 18, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-climatechange-forests/norway-starts-payments-to-indonesia-for-cutting-forest-emissions-idUSKCN1Q70ZY>

¹⁹ "About GCF." Green Climate Fund. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/about>

²⁰ Keating, Dave. "EU Labels Biofuel From Palm Oil As Unsustainable, Bans Subsidies." Forbes, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davekeating/2019/03/14/eu-labels-biofuel-from-palm-oil-as-unsustainable-bans-subsidies/#8a95b119c9da>

human rights in each country.²¹ IRI works with government officials to incorporate anti-deforestation measures in national development strategies. During the UN Climate Week in September 2019, IRI unveiled its Faiths for Forests Declaration and Action Agenda, calling on religious groups and faith-linked organizations to mobilise, educate, and advocate for rainforest protection and climate justice.²²

IRI is one among many interfaith coalitions actively addressing deforestation and climate change on a global level; other groups include GreenFaith, Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI), and the United Religions Initiative (URI's) Environmental Network.²³

Secular-religious partnerships help bring religious voices into policy discussions and encourage sustainable, community-based action among faith communities. Since the late 1990s, the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology has been the premier database on religious engagement on the environment, publishing books, articles, and newsletters on initiatives led by the world's different religious traditions.²⁴ The UK-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), founded in 1995, was among the first international organizations to work with religious leaders on

environmental issues, notably through the adoption and implementation of long-term action plans for ecological sustainability. Following the closure of ARC in June 2019, a new International Network for Conservation and Religion was announced to continue the organization's work.²⁵ The World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Sacred Earth program likewise partners with religious leaders and institutions to help shape sustainable decision-making in their communities.²⁶ Since 2017, the United Nations' Faith for Earth Initiative has worked with faith-based organizations to strengthen environmental advocacy efforts and strengthen the ecological sustainability of these organizations' investments and assets.²⁷

Religious leaders play important roles in framing the issue of deforestation within a broader human rights context and in encouraging their communities to take action. Five years after the encyclical *Laudato Si'* was published, Pope Francis gives constant priority to environmental protection and indigenous rights, a message he reiterated during recent trips to Peru and Madagascar.²⁸ The Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region, held in October 2019 in Rome, was the first Roman Catholic synod to address the threat deforestation poses to indigenous communities; before the synod, more than

20,000 indigenous people from the Amazon took part in assemblies and discussions organized by the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM), and representatives of indigenous communities gave personal testimonies to church leaders during the synod. The gathering closed with a statement calling on Catholics to undergo an "ecological conversion" in order to combat environmental destruction.²⁹

Other religious leaders have likewise stressed the need to address climate change within their communities. Bartholomew I, ecumenical patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, is known as the "Green Patriarch" for his longstanding support of environmental causes.³⁰ In 2017, he issued a joint statement with Pope Francis calling on Christians worldwide to address climate change in their own lives.³¹ Following the publication of *Laudato Si'*, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist leaders issued statements affirming their commitment to drawing upon their faiths' resources to mitigate the effects of climate change and promote ecologically sustainable lifestyles.³² In Indonesia, the local Council of Ulama issued fatwas in 2014 and 2016, calling on Muslims to protect endangered species and refrain

from clearing forests for commercial gain.³³ In March 2020, more than 200 participants from six countries took part in a digital conference hosted by the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative to discuss pressing environmental issues, including deforestation.³⁴

Religious leaders play important roles in framing the issue of deforestation within a broader human rights context and in encouraging their communities to take action

²¹ Catanoso, Justin. "Interfaith leaders step up to protect the world's 'sacred' rainforests." Mongabay News, September 17, 2019. <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/what-did-interfaith-rainforest-initiative-achieve-2019>

²² "Faiths for Forests" Declaration, Campaign and Global Action Agenda <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/28896> (Sept. 2019)

²³ For more religious and interfaith organizations focused on environmental issues, see the list compiled by the UNEP: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25987/EFBO.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

²⁴ "Mission and Vision." Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology. <https://fore.yale.edu/About-Us/Mission-and-Vision>

²⁵ "International Network for Conservation and Religion announced." Alliance of Religions and Conservation. June 25, 2019. <http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=914>

²⁶ "Sacred Earths: Faiths for Conservation." World Wildlife Fund. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/sacred-earth-faiths-for-conservation>

²⁷ "Why faith and environment matters." United National Environment Programme. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative/why-faith-and-environment-matters>

²⁸ Wooden, Cindy. "Help the poor, protect the environment, pope says in Madagascar." Catholic News Service, September 7, 2019. <https://cnstopstories.com/2019/09/07/help-the-poor-protect-the-environment-pope-says-in-madagascar/>; "Pope Francis in Amazonia, the Periphery of the Peripheries." Red Ecclesial Pan-Amazonica. January 25, 2018. <http://redamazonica.org/en/2018/01/pope-francis-in-amazonia-the-periphery-of-the-peripheries/>

²⁹ Hansen, Luke. "Top five takeaways from the Amazon synod." America. November 11, 2019. <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/11/11/top-five-takeaways-amazon-synod>

³⁰ Chryssavgis, John. "The Green Patriarch: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Protection of the Environment." Ecumenical Patriarchate. <https://www.patriarchate.org/the-green-patriarch>

³¹ "Joint Message of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the World Day of Prayer for Creation." The Vatican, September 1, 2017. http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170901_messaggio-giornata-cura-creato.html

³² "Rabbinic Letter on Climate." The Shalom Center, October 29, 2015. <https://theshalomcenter.org/RabbinicLetterClimate>; "Islamic Declaration on Climate Change." United Nations Climate Change, August 18, 2015. <https://unfccc.int/news/islamic-declaration-on-climate-change>; "Hindu Declaration on Climate Change." United Nations Climate Change, November 23, 2015. <https://unfccc.int/news/hindu-declaration-on-climate-change>; "Buddhist Climate Change Statement to World Leaders 2015." Global Buddhist Climate Change Collective, October 29, 2015. <http://gbccc.org/>

³³ "Working as one: how Indonesia came together for its peatlands and forests." United Nations Environment Programme. June 4, 2019. <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/working-one-how-indonesia-came-together-its-peatlands-and-forests>; "Indonesian clerics issue fatwa to protect endangered species." Alliance of Religions and Conservation, March 5, 2014. <http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageid=689>

³⁴ "Coronavirus, faith leaders and sustainable development." United National Environment Programme. <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/coronavirus-faith-leaders-and-sustainable-development>

// PROTECT AND RESTORE RAINFORESTS

Preserving intact rainforests and restoring degraded land are essential to curbing the long-term damage of deforestation. G20 countries should promote measures to protect forests and peatlands rather than allocate them for commercial use, and support efforts to rehabilitate degraded ecosystems. New approaches within agricultural industries are likewise essential to reverse the damage caused by deforestation. G20 leaders can take decisive action by withdrawing support for subsidies to industries that rely on deforestation.

// PROMOTE INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Indigenous populations are disproportionately affected by tropical deforestation. G20 rainforest countries can take concrete actions to uphold customary land rights and recognise indigenous claims to their ancestral lands, and support community-based monitoring systems that report human rights violations and provide legal assistance to indigenous communities. G20 leaders should ensure that indigenous voices are included in policymaking processes at all levels.

// STRONGER OVERSIGHT OF INDUSTRY, PROMOTE LIFESTYLE CHANGES

G20 leaders should use their influence to press for greater transparency for the environmental and human rights impact of commercial industries. Support for independent third-party verification mechanisms to regulate company supply chains and address potential violations is one promising approach. G20 governments should endorse national initiatives to reduce consumption of meat and dairy sourced from deforested land.

// SUPPORT RESEARCH AND FAITH-LINKED ADVOCACY EFFORTS

G20 leaders should fund research to better understand the impact of deforestation on the spread of viruses; rainforest countries in particular should act quickly to promote land protection efforts that reduce risks of disease transmission from animals to humans. G20 countries and organizations such as the UN and WWF should continue to work closely with faith actors on issues of deforestation and conservation, collaborating with them in policymaking discussions and project implementation.

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Looking Ahead: Recommendations

The following recommendations directed to G20 leaders and religious authorities highlight urgent matters facing the world's rainforests and potential courses of action. These priority steps represent a broad con-

sensus among scientists and policy analysts and are highlighted here because G20 members and religious authorities linked to the G20 Interfaith Forum have the potential to advance action.

1.

Restrict commercial access to forests. Preserving intact rainforests is an essential step in containing the impact of deforestation on the climate. G20 countries with tropical forests need to act quickly to protect these forests rather than allocating them for commercial use. G20 leaders should encourage and support moratoriums on deforestation, such as the one introduced in Indonesia in 2011 and since made permanent. Special emphasis should be placed on preserving carbon-rich peatlands and mangrove forests, as they preserve diverse ecosystems, protect against soil erosion, and absorb large amounts of carbon.

2.

Demand accountability in global supply chains. G20 leaders should use their influence to push for greater transparency regarding the environmental and human rights impact of commercial industries. Support for independent third-party verification mechanisms to regulate company supply chains and address potential violations is a promising approach. G20 leaders can act against companies that do not implement zero deforestation in their supply chains through taxation and procurement and import regulations.

3. Support sustainable alternatives to the agriculture and logging industries. With commercial farming responsible for around 80 percent of deforestation in tropical countries, new approaches within the agriculture industry are essential in halting the rate of destruction.³⁵ G20 leaders should support efforts to phase out subsidies to industries that support deforestation in favor of industries that do not rely on clearing forests or draining peat swamps. Costa Rica offers a successful model for other rainforest countries: after reducing subsidies for the cattle industry in the 1980s, forest cover increased in subsequent decades and the economy diversified.

4. Increase agricultural productivity on already cleared lands. As the global population rises, the agriculture industry faces growing pressure to expand. To curb an accompanying increase in deforestation rates, G20 leaders should act now to support efficient use of agricultural land, for example offering financial incentives to companies that use sustainable agricultural methods and supporting research efforts to further develop these methods.

5. Support land restoration efforts. Rehabilitating degraded ecosystems wherever possible is essential to recouping losses from deforestation. G20 rainforest countries should support regulations and financial incentives for forest rehabilitation efforts. Restoring carbon-rich peatlands is an effective method to reduce carbon emissions and boost overall climate resilience.

6. Protect indigenous rights. Recognising and defending indigenous forest communities' claims to their ancestral lands helps create a buffer against encroaching industry and promotes traditional agricultural practices that mitigate the impact of climate change. G20 rainforest countries should uphold customary land rights, recognise indigenous claims to unsecured lands, and reform conservation policies in order to ease indigenous groups' access to the forest. Special priority should be given to communities whose land and resources have been stolen or degraded by government authorities, commercial industries, or land traffickers. Governments should assist in establishing community-based monitoring systems to report disputes with companies, conflicts over land, and human rights violations, and provide legal assistance

³⁵ "Conclusions and Recommendations." Closing the Gap. <https://rightsanddeforestation.org/policy-papers/conclusion-and-recommendations/>

to indigenous communities challenging illegal deforestation practices. G20 leaders and religious authorities can support these efforts by speaking out against the illegal seizure of indigenous lands and attacks on environmental activists.

7. Amplify indigenous voices in environmental policy discussions at the local, national, and global levels. G20 leaders should assure that national governments and international partners listen to the expertise and concerns of indigenous forest communities directly affected by deforestation. Rainforest nations should seek out indigenous perspectives in formulating national development plans. G20 leaders should support appropriate allocations of multilateral funds for forest conservation, such as the UNFCCC's Green Climate Fund, and funding for indigenous communities to promote traditional conservation practices.

8. Reduce dependence on meat and dairy and eliminate food loss and waste. Implemented on a global scale, diet and lifestyle changes could lower demand for new agricultural land and stem rates of deforestation. Measures that discourage food loss in supply chains and food waste among consumers can help reduce unnecessary destruction of additional forest. G20 leaders should support initiatives in their countries that cut down on meat and dairy consumption, with a particular emphasis on beef.

9. Support research into links between habitat destruction and the emergence of infectious disease. In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, G20 countries should fund research efforts to better understand the impact of deforestation on the spread of viruses. Rainforest countries should act quickly to promote land protection efforts that reduce the risk of disease transmission from wild animals to humans.

10. Recognise the contributions of religious leadership on rainforest issues and collaborate with faith communities on future initiatives. Religious leaders and faith-linked organizations are well-positioned to represent the interests of their communities. G20 countries and organizations such as the UN and WWF should continue to work closely with faith actors on issues of deforestation and conservation, collaborating with them in policymaking discussions and project implementation.



ANNEX B:

STATEMENTS



STATEMENT AT THE CLOSING OF THE 2020 G20 INTERFAITH FORUM BY THE ORGANIZING PARTNERS

17 Oct 2020

As this year's G20 Interfaith Forum came to a conclusion, the key organizers - HE Faisal bin Muaammar, Secretary General of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), Prof. W. Cole Durham Jr, President of the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, HE Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and Dr Abdullah Alhomaïd, Secretary General of Saudi Arabia's National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue - highlighted central conclusions emerging from the Forum.

The partners thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its unwavering support for, and participation in, the G20 Interfaith Forum and extend their high hopes for a successful G20 Leaders' Summit.

The G20 Interfaith Forum concludes an elaborate consultation process that has involved religious and multireligious leaders and institutions, policymakers, and a rich network of faith-based organizations and was conducted

digitally across 70 countries, on five continents. Recommendations from this months-long series of consultations on pressing challenges facing the human development agenda were reviewed at the 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum which concluded on October 17.

The five-day Forum brought together prominent religious leaders from across the faith spectrum, interreligious leaders, and distinguished members of faith-based organizations as well as government officials, senior officials of United Nations entities, opinion formers and more than two thousand participants from all over the world to debate a wide array of issues ranging from hate speech to COVID-19 to gender parity and economic displacement.

In these trying times, when the scourge of COVID-19 is causing unprecedented global economic and social dislocation, policymakers should recognise that for over 80 per cent of the world's population, the prism of a faith tradition affects day-to-day life, norms and relationships.

Religious leaders in many parts of the world go far beyond conducting worship and pastoral oversight. Their leadership exemplifies the spiritual and practical ideals of charity, security, common purpose, human rights and cohesiveness for everyone, including the most vulnerable in all societies.

Recommendations considered during the Forum are grounded in the experience and wisdom of the world of faith and the experience and insights of religious actors and institutions.

Proposals address all aspects of the global human development endeavour as framed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Priority recommendations will be submitted to the November G20 Leaders' Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The breadth of topics considered highlights for us the need for more systematic, continuing relationships among faith leaders, governments, the United Nations itself, and global opinion formers.

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

Given the relevance of the world of religion to policymaking, as demonstrated by the success of this year's G20 Interfaith Forum and the process leading up to it, a central recommendation is that the time has come for formal recognition of the interfaith platform of the G20 Interfaith Forum as an official engagement group in future G20 Summits.

Systematic engagement of religious actors in policymaking processes at national and international levels offers significant potential to enrich and enhance responses and implementation on many topics including disaster preparedness and response.

The G20 process should have as its constant beacon a focus on vulnerable communities and can benefit from the continuing engagement with the G20 Interfaith Forum to keep this

ethical and practical priority always at the fore.

In coming days, priority attention needs to be given to engaging religious communities in development, testing and distribution of anti-COVID-19 vaccines.

The urgent and compelling challenge of protecting the planet raises not only physical but moral and spiritual concerns that religious communities are uniquely prepared to address as partners in global governance instruments.

The partners express their thanks to the remarkable group of religious leaders and actors, religiously affiliated institutions, public officials, academics and other experts, all of whom have contributed their time, their insights and hard work to make the 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum in Saudi Arabia a great success.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ON ELIMINATING RACISM IN ALL ITS FORMS

August 2020

The following Statement of Principles frames ongoing conversations and actions of the G20 Interfaith Forum and working groups that address global agendas, in opposing racism and promoting human dignity and equity. During the global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, the brutal murder of African American George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis sparked a heightened awareness of the scourge of racism and unleashed a planet wide wave of outrage and revulsion.

The G20 Interfaith Forum Association (IF20), a

network of religiously linked institutions and experts active since 2014, provides a regular platform for religious voices to engage with the G20 process in framing global policy initiatives. We cannot speak for religious communities but the IF20 has earned credibility over time as an organization that can help channel distinctive religious insights into G20 policy formation processes. Our mandate obliges us to bring faith and public policies together. The exercise of that mandate demands a recognition that racism, far from an isolated issue, infects every aspect of human endeavor and planetary existence.

THEREFORE, THE IF20:

1. Recognises that all humanity shares one planetary home. We have no option but to learn how to share our common space in equity and harmony. In this Age of the Anthropocene, this cannot be reduced to aspiration. It is life and death. As faith communities, we are in accord with many traditions that "the earth is the Lord's", and therefore sacred.

2. Recognises that humanity is one family. The evidence of anthropology and the witness of many of our sacred texts conclude that all people share a common ancestry. We are all

related. Our common heritage forbids that any might claim a racial pre-eminence over another.

3. Insists that no human being is more human than any other, in accordance with the 1963 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/18/1904) which "solemnly affirms the necessity of speedily eliminating racial discrimination throughout the world in all its forms and manifestations and securing understanding of and respect for the human dignity of human persons, convinced that any doctrine of supe-

riority based on racial differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous and that there is no justification for racial discrimination in theory and in practice anywhere."¹

4. Reconfirms our commitment and support of all international instruments outlawing racism in all its forms, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, among others.

5. Pledges to recognise, resist, and repudiate racism in all its forms and expressions. Insists that human beings are always subjects, never objects. People are never to be commodified or instrumentalised, but cherished. As people of faith, we affirm the precious worth of every life as an obvious consequence of divine love and compassion.

6. Deplores personal acts of racism in both word and action, and the systemic and often subtle racism in local, regional and global societies. Racism based on the alleged inferiority of any given people group is insidious and multifaceted. It is personal and collective. It is systemic and structural. It is institutional and has been used as a tool to socialise people

into racist behaviors and ways of relating to others through inferiority or superiority complex, patronising attitudes that are demeaning to human dignity. We note that racism in its sometimes less obvious forms can include phenomena in the kind of ethnic, antisemitic, Islamophobic or other religious distinctions which do not depend on visible differences.

7. Looks to the G20 and like global institutions, organizations and communities to provide leadership dedicated to the elimination of racism and the promotion of equity among all manner and conditions of people and peoples.

8. Further pledges to recognise, expose, and eradicate racism, and to promote equity, for example, by encouraging governments to create review mechanisms aimed at dismantling structural and institutional racism.

9. Eschews racism for political gain whether in practice or as an instrument of propaganda by any political, civil, or faith-based agency.

10. Commits to honoring the universal principle enshrined in one form of expression or another in all our religious and spiritual traditions and affirmed in principle by secularists and humanists: "do unto others as you would be done by".

¹ General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, New York, 21 December 1965, para. 5-6, available from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>.

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