

INTERFAITH COLABORATION FOR POST 2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

SALUTATION:

I bring you fraternal greetings from the country of Sierra Leone. I wish to thank you all with a special reference to the UN for your tremendous moral, human and financial contribution to our country particularly at this time, for the eradication of the dreadful disease called Ebola.

Interfaith dialogue and collaboration have proved to be very important for Peaceful co-existence and development. This is clearly demonstrated in the Sierra Leone Scenario, where the two major Faiths (Islam and Christianity) work together in interfaith dialogue to address issues of National Importance. Its collaboration with government helped the government to realize the development they have made in achieving the MDGs. We are convinced and persuaded that interfaith collaboration and dialogue have a tremendous role to play in the POST 2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

The premise for this is the large constituency and formidable structure of the Interfaith Councils – National, Regional, Districts, Chiefdoms, Sections, town and villages.

1. CONCRETE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

In achieving the Post 2015, Development Agenda, the following concrete actions can be considered by Faith Based Institutions

BUILD STRONG INTERFAITH INSTITUTIONS.

This constitutes the following:

- Establishing interfaith organizations as in the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL).
- Religious tolerance
- Peaceful dialogue for all religions
- Respect for religious symbols and traditions in society.
- Understand all faiths to facilitate development.

PROVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

Religious institutions have the ability to provide social service in **health, education and other development programs**. In Sierra Leone for example more than half of the schools and hospitals are faith based. The situation in Sierra Leone is such that there is no restriction posed on any person accessing these institutions and personnel serving in them.

PROVISION OF RELEVANT CIVIC EDUCATION:

All religions have the responsibility to provide relevant education that helps promote **democracy, human rights** and **good governance**. Many people in society are ignorant about these issues. People need to acquire such knowledge for the post 2015 sustainable development. Interfaith Councils have the capacity for this – **Its Structure**.

PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The things that promote human dignity (human rights) such as the **basic needs of life** (food, shelter, and clothing), **education, employment, health** etc. need to be protected and promoted by all religious institutions. The post 2015 Development Agenda is geared towards the protection and promotion of human rights for which the interfaith institutions are better positioned to undertake.

PROMOTING GOVERNMENT’S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

- Promote the rule of law
- Continue to support and promote government democratic institutions such as HRCSL, Anti-Corruption Commissions, Independent Police Complaint

Board, National Commission for Democracy, National Electoral Commission, and Political Parties Registration Commissions.

- Hold government accountable to the people.

2. BEST PRACTICES OF FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS:

Here I consider what Faith based Institutions are known for or in other words, serves as their greatest strengths in our communities.

REACHING PEOPLE IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY

- Interfaith collaboration takes on board all people in their respective communities where they can be targeted and reached with the message of the Development Agenda.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

- Development programs are people oriented hence are sustainable.

GALVANIZING THE EFFORT OF GREATER NUMBER OF PEOPLE

- Man by nature is religious. This means interfaith collaboration brings on board everybody in the development agenda. Mobilization of greater number of people.

TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR OTHER'S RELIGION

- Interfaith collaboration in development calls for the respect of others religion. This fosters both **Peace and Development**.

3. LESSONS LEARNT IN THE FIELD DURING THE MDG PERIOD

- That interfaith collaboration and dialogue bring out two fundamental elements of human existence: ***Peace and Development***. **The IRCSL for example was instrumental in the peace negotiation following the ten years of brutal civil war in our country.**

- That interfaith collaboration and dialogue is an indispensable tool for the development effort of every nation – **The Ebola Crisis in Sierra Leone (Early Intervention, suggestions for safe and dignified, burial, Spiritual interventions, ongoing sensitization)**
- That interfaith collaboration and dialogue is an opportunity to learn, act and take responsibility for the Development Agenda.
- That interfaith collaboration is still a challenge in society: **Reluctance of some Christian and Muslim groups to collaborate with Interfaith Councils, the fragmentation in addressing certain national issues** (E.G. The Ebola Crisis in Sierra Leone) and the low prophetic stands against government actions due to the fact that Religious Leaders accept appointments to serve in National Boards and Commissions.

As I conclude I want to draw your attention to the fact that interfaith collaboration and dialogue is never devoid of government's effort. In Sierra Leone for example the government is solidly in support of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue and works closely with the Interfaith Council in the promotion of religious tolerance and sustainable development. We are proud to acknowledge the effort of our government in her commitment in working towards the MGDs irrespective of the challenges of the civil conflict and the current Ebola scourge.