

Pre-Assembly Regional Consultation Reports

Advancing *Shared Well-Being* by Fostering
Sustainable and Integral Human
Development



Religions for Peace 

AFRICA

The spiritual, social and economic health and physical wellbeing of society supported by a sustainable system of economic growth are crucial for efforts towards progressive development. In realization of integral human development therefore all the Seventeen (17) SDGs are supported by our religious scriptures in many ways, the religious leaders call for a balanced and comprehensive domestication of the SDGs as anchored in our scriptures, for effective assimilation and realization by our populations. We commit to:

- Reduce infant mortality by prioritizing and advocating for increased investment in health care infrastructure, and accessibility of free quality maternal and neonatal health care and human resource development. In addition, promote health education to address taboos and negative cultural perspectives on maternal health.
- Religious leaders globally to publicize and advocate against wealth concentration by TNC and individuals that control to the detriment of poor societies especially in Africa.
- Encourage investments towards the management of social problems facing the youth like drug addiction and drug abuse, alcoholism, and regulation of potential social activities like gambling.
- Support efforts towards access to public social amenities and quality services in all sectors including health, education, housing and transport.
- Religious leaders and institutions to help reduce social and economic disparities and ensure sustainable use and management of resources by tangible research and advocacy that strengthens transparency and accountability to citizen and social institutions.
- Religious leaders to support mechanisms and approaches that fastens a fairer institutional-financial order and prevents social destabilization by international lending systems that cripple economies of developing nations and creates unsustainable debt.
- Encourage a prioritization of holistic education to improve general physical wellbeing, interpersonal relations and personal peace among members of the community.
- Develop a comprehensive multi-religious African perspective on the domestication of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to define the contribution of Religions towards the attainment of the SDGs, and to serve as a resource for the training of Religious Leaders, women and youth on effective dissemination of the SDGs to the congregants through the congregational model.
- Seek the support of faith leaders in Europe and the diaspora to push their governments to repatriate Africa's resources taken during the colonial period and stolen by African leaders for possible investment into common public initiatives.
- Champion a spirited campaign against HIV/AIDS and reduction of new infections and support marginalization and stigmatization of the affected, specifically youth, women and persons with disability (PWDs).

Asia Women of Faith Network promoted the following observations and recommendations:

- *RfP* is asked to strongly promote and advocate for institutionalized peace education in primary and secondary schools in tertiary institutions and in informal education settings. That this education be based on the six principles to educate for a culture of peace. These being:
 - Dismantling the culture of war
 - Living with justice and compassion
 - Promoting human rights and responsibilities
 - Building respect for cultural and religious diversity, reconciliation and solidarity
 - Living in Harmony with the Earth
 - Cultivating inner peace

Such peace education needs to include women's rights and political empowerment, ethical and family values and multifaith education.

- National Chapters are asked to consider conducting multi-faith sessions on healing and counselling for those who suffer from psychological issues due to violence against women.
- Regional/National chapters of *RfP* develop an easily accessible database on women's issue so that women of faith can share their best practices.
- *RfP* working together with affected countries develop training on how to investigate, educate, lobby, and advocate at a local, national and international level against human trafficking.

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EUROPE

Observations

There is arguably a legitimate question to be asked about whether the SDGs accurately represent a religious and spiritual approach to sustainable human development. That said, it is possible to identify common religious and spiritual values in many of the SDGs, and as religious communities we should see them as a gift to humanity and do our utmost to support their achievement.

Religious and multi-faith engagement with the SDGs should not be seen as an added dimension, but religious engagement should be integral aspect of all forms of economic, social and environmental development.

Many religious communities and faith-based organizations have a history of carrying out work related to the SDGs, and in direct service provision in a wide range of areas. However, it is important that governments do not become complacent and rely on third sector organizations to fulfil their obligations in relation to social and economic development.

Opportunities

There is clear evidence that conflict is a significant impediment to development, and as religious leaders we need to do more to hold European governments to account for their roles in violent conflict and to encourage our governments to spend less on military expenditure and more on supporting development work internationally and in our own countries.

We also need to make more efforts to engage the business community and companies and attempt to prevent non-ethical business practices and behavior, and to encourage businesses to engage more in development initiatives and projects.

In all our religious traditions we also have doctrines and teachings about the sacred nature of time. We can draw on these to emphasize the urgency required to make the significant changes needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030, if we are not to have a profoundly negative and irreversible impact on the planet and all life.

At a local level within our own communities, the SDG indicators can be used to assess progress on important areas of development, such as education, healthcare, inequality, employment, etc.; and religious actors can use these measures to hold governments and authorities to account. We should also encourage local and national governments to refer to the SDGs in their planning and policies.

Actions

A proposal could be put forward in Lindau to develop a worldwide *RfP* strategy and initiative which focuses on enhancing engagement with business and encouraging more engagement on social economic development projects.

Religions for Peace

Put forward a proposal in Lindau to develop a project and resources which draws on the concept of sacred time in all religious traditions to emphasize the urgency of our current situation, and the urgent need to take action on climate change, in other areas of human development.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Observations

The most serious problem is inequality, accompanied by poverty, which results in other situations that limit social development. Various inequalities persist in the region, despite the Poverty Reduction Strategies implemented in several Latin American countries in the last twenty years; or the Conditional Cash Transfer programs for the poorest households (implemented in several countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Guatemala) for the last fifteen years; and other social programs.

There is a tendency to measure the development of countries by macroeconomic indicators, such as the Gross Domestic Product. However, this is not an indicator of life quality. In our countries, prevail gaps in access to education, health, food, employment and housing; these differences are commonly marked by the conditions of rurality, gender and ethnicity.

Opportunities

From the inequality and structural poverty in our countries, a series of social problems are linked, systemically connected, from which three are mentioned: migration, discrimination and racism, and food and nutritional insecurity.

- Migration: Latin America registers a high international migration rates that have increased in most recent years. Most migrants seek to reach the United States or Europe, in order to have a job that allows them to improve their family income. In the first case, the most typical path is through undocumented migration surrounded by a high risk of criminal harassment along the way, detention or deportation at the destination. In addition, the separation of families and the configuration of new models of transnational families are transforming our societies; and not always for good. Moreover, internal migration is also an expression of the marginalization of rural territories in the countries' development programs. In large cities, there are intense growth population trends that happen faster than in small towns. This occurs because cities concentrate services and economic activities, and therefore employment opportunities.
- Discrimination and racism: groups such as indigenous communities, migrants, women, youth, and rural territories; show disadvantages in the access to education, housing and decent employment. The latter, there are cases in which informal employment reaches $\frac{3}{4}$ of the working population. These differences reveal a structure of discrimination due the lack of minimum quality living standards giving by the governments. But it also reveals the discriminatory practices that are often invisible, such as the lack of social security programs for working mothers (that could assure them a coverage in pregnancy and postpartum so they are not forced to leave their work for maternity) and the lack of nurseries for the same effect. Thus, there is a tendency to lower investment in infrastructure at indigenous territories and/or at places with more poverty rates.
- Food and nutritional insecurity: Although there are countries such as Chile or Cuba that are exempt from this reality, in most Latin American countries there are still significant levels of chronic child malnutrition. It is estimated that in the region there are more than 5 million children with chronic malnutrition and 700,000 children at risk of death due to hunger, with more dramatic

cases such as Guatemala, where 46.5% of children under five years of age suffer malnutrition. This mainly occurs due to the lack of guarantees for continued access to quality food, which threatens the achievement of sustainable development given the negative consequences on the growth of girls and boys, and on maternal death.

Action Proposals

1st: Create and strengthen solidarity initiatives with marginalized and excluded social groups, through the following actions:

- To dialogue with economic and political elites
- To dialogue with governments
- To promote formation processes on social awareness
- To facilitate the access and promote experiences of good practices and joint initiatives.

2nd: Recognition and rights restitution of population groups excluded from development, appealing to the mediating role of faith-based religions and organizations. This implies actions such as the following:

- To form interfaith platforms to support initiatives in favor of indigenous communities
- Value the inside of our communities and socialize experiences on sustainable models of production and promote the Sustainable Development Goals.

3rd: Promotion of programs aimed to satisfy basic needs of the population: especially for food, health and education.

- Strengthen networks of interfaith cooperation
- Share good practices from different OBFs
- Motivate within the faithful for their involvement in these initiatives.

4th: Strengthen regional action platforms:

- To construct interreligious regional platforms on specific aspects.
- To promote training processes within the platforms, on common topics of interest to raise awareness.
- To open spaces for dialogue with actors and decision makers at regional levels about one of the specific problems already described.
- To start strategic advocacy processes.

NORTH AMERICA

Key Concerns

- A key concern for groups in the United States is lack of government support for multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- There is a concern with how to make SDGs more relevant and pressing on a local level. Some groups suggested that they could be tied to local issues such as student loan concerns, homelessness, and health insurance in order to “make the global more local.”
- Several groups expressed concern about reproductive rights not being included in this theme’s report. There were several disagreements about how the topic should best be addressed within faith communities, indicating that this is a key area for further discussion.

Role of Religious Resources

- Contextualize SDGs and make them relevant through respective religious Scriptures. This means interpreting and communicating goals in a way that makes them resonate with audiences in the developed world (making SDGs ‘local’).

Further Capacity Building

- More work needs to be done on how to make the SDGs resonate on a more local level. Religious leaders can take lead on this brainstorming and think about creative ideas such as divesting from oil as an organization or addressing sustainable waste disposal and resource consumption from a religious perspective.