



Religions *for* Peace

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the International Secretariat team and do not necessarily reflect the institutional views of *Religions for Peace* World Council members.

OUR MOVEMENT IN NUMBERS

1 Global, multi-religious movement for peace

6 Strategic Priorities

10 World Assemblies to build consensus on the global peace priorities of the world's faiths

20+ Innovative interfaith projects supported by our flagship Multi-Religious Humanitarian Fund

51 Years of bringing the world's religion together for peace

92 Affiliated Interreligious Councils

100+ Leaders representing the world's faith traditions in our World Council, *Religions for Peace's* governing board

Table of Contents

5	Letter from the Secretary General
6	Executive Summary
11	Building Peaceful, Just & Inclusive Societies
14	Advancing Gender Equality
16	Nurturing a Sustainable Environment
18	Championing Freedom of Thought, Conscience & Religion
19	Strengthening Inter-religious Education
20	Fostering Multi-religious Collaboration & Global Partnerships
21	<i>Religions for Peace</i> Roster of Experts
21	New Tools and Publications
22	Global Inter-religious Council Directory
23	2021 Financial Report

Letter from the Secretary General

In spite of a raging public health pandemic, or perhaps spurred by it, “religion” is trending in international development, foreign affairs, academia and the private sector. Religious leaders are elected into parliaments, serving as presidential advisors, invited on campaign trails, and/or sought out by pharmaceutical companies and corporations.

Diverse media seek to capture, disseminate and ponder what the Catholic Pope has to say - on anything. European and Gulf governments are investing millions in ‘religious engagement’, ‘religion and peace building’, ‘religion and climate change’, and increasingly ‘religion and COVID-19 Vaccines’. Simultaneously, more and more detractors voice concerns about ‘religious conflicts.’

Most, if not all the emphasis abounding in diverse corners, focuses on one religion at a time. Interfaith or multi-religious endeavors are often confused, or narrowed down to, ecumenical efforts, or to those undertaken by Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).

Many religious leaders representing religious institutions lament the fact that “there is a great deal of ‘religion’ in public life, but there is very little faith in the management of public affairs.”

Within this climate, *Religions for Peace*, in its 51st year, continues to serve the mission of convening and facilitating religious institutions and faith communities to work together, to serve the common good. In line with its six strategic priorities which are consonant with the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs)/Agenda 2030, what follows is a few select highlights.

Professor Azza Karam
Secretary General, *Religions for Peace* International

“Pro Humanitate” European Culture Prize



Prof. Azza Karam accepting the "Pro Humanitate" Prize in Lindau, 2021

Religions for Peace was awarded the “Pro Humanitate” European Culture Prize in Lindau, Germany. Granted by the Pro Europa Cultural Foundation, the award is presented annually to individuals and organisations whom embody the idea that Europe’s strength lies in respect for human dignity. In receiving the award, Prof. Azza Karam reiterated that “*Religions for Peace* has dedicated 50 years of service to fostering interreligious collaboration because we firmly believe that dialogue and united action between the world’s religious communities can effect lasting change in the world.”

Executive Summary

In 2021, *Religions for Peace* continued to develop actions corresponding with its Strategic Plan, which was approved and adopted by its governing board of over 100 religious leaders (the World Council), representing their respective religious institutions and communities from all over the world. The Strategic Plan has set six Strategic Priorities for the period of 2020-2025, aligned in language, intent, and indicators with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In pursuing these six Strategic Priorities, we work as a movement inclusive of our regional and national affiliates, and in partnership with governmental and intergovernmental entities, as well as non-governmental civil society actors. As we bring partners together with the Inter-religious Councils, we strengthen social cohesion in service for the common good. These are just a few key efforts undertaken by *Religions for Peace*:

- **Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies**

- **Advocacy**

- Religious and spiritual leaders in Canada joined the profound sorrow and agony of Indigenous communities, as unmarked graves of Indigenous children were found on the grounds of residential schools in Canada: [Statement on Recent Discoveries of Graves at Residential Schools in Canada \(8 July\)](#); [Faithful Conversation on Restorative Justice, Intergenerational Healing, and Reconciliation \(10 August\)](#)
- Leaders of *Religions for Peace*-Haiti issued a joint letter to “invoke the soul of this great nation for resilience, tolerance, dialogue, peace, and reconciliation at this time of crisis”: [A Letter to the People of Haiti \(15 July\)](#).

- **Capacity Building**

- *Religions for Peace* held the 5th session of the 2021 Global IRC Development Strategic Learning Exchange Webinar Series, focusing on how multi-religious collaboration transforms violent conflicts, promote just and harmonious societies, and advance human development: [Global Learning Exchange on the Role of Interreligious Councils in Building Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies \(8 November\)](#)
- *Religions for Peace*, together with the World Health Organisation (WHO), work with and in support of national governments to achieve joint health goals, mitigate the negative effects of health emergencies, and help bring them to an end: [WHO and Religions for Peace Global Conference on Strengthening National Responses to Health Emergencies \(20 October to 3 December\)](#)
- The 9th Governance Assembly of the Asian Conference of *Religions for Peace* (ACRP) was convened, during which the Tokyo Assembly approved a revamped Constitution, as well as the interim membership of Timor-Leste: [Tokyo Declaration 2021 \(8 November\)](#).

- **Advancing Gender Equality**

- **Advocacy**

- *Religions for Peace* joined the global Thursdays in Black campaign in partnership with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and mobilised its global movement to raise awareness on rape and violence against women and advocate to end sexual and gender-based violence. Prof. Azza Karam became an [Ambassador of the Thursdays in Black campaign](#) and was [interviewed](#) by the World Council of Churches on *Religions for Peace's* commitment to the cause: [Thursdays in Black Campaign: Joint Initiative of Religions for Peace and World Council of Churches \(11 March\)](#).
 - As part of the campaign, *Religions for Peace's* Global Interfaith Youth Network in cooperation with *Religions for Peace's* Youth Media Team developed a [Thursdays in Black Video](#).
 - *Religions for Peace's* Women of Faith commemorated the 30th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women by speaking out against violence in all forms, particularly against women and girls: [Statement of Religions for Peace Women of Faith on Overcoming \(Sexual\) Violence Against Women \(25 November to 10 December\)](#).
 - Women of Faith stood together against environmental degradation and exploitation during the UN Climate Change Conference: [Women of Faith Statement | COP26](#)

- **Knowledge Management**

- Prof. Azza Karam shed light on sexual abuse and harassment within interfaith gatherings and institutions, and the importance of maintaining nontolerance for abuse: [Stopping Sexual Harassment Where Religious Communities Meet from Religious News Service by Prof. Azza Karam \(3 May\)](#).
 - *Religions for Peace* published a piece expressing support for the Moose Hide Campaign to raise awareness of violence against Indigenous women in Canada and advocate for their protection: [Moose Hide Campaign Inspires Men to Become Involved in the Movement to End Gender-Based Violence \(3 June\)](#)

- **Capacity Building**

- Prof. Azza Karam moderated the session on “Activating Faith, Feminism, and Freedom to Choose” at the Generation Equality Forum (30 June to 2 July) convened by UN Women and the governments of Mexico and France, in which a 5-year action journey to fulfill the promise of the Beijing Platform for Action and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals was launched.

- **Nurturing a Sustainable Environment**

- **Advocacy**

- On World Rainforest Day, *Religions for Peace's* World Council stood in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and forest communities in the Amazon and urged for ongoing efforts to ensure their rights, cultural integrity, and dignity: [Religions for Peace World Council Statement in Support of the Amazon and Its Indigenous Peoples On the Occasion of the World Rainforest Day \(22 June\)](#).

- Capacity Building
 - *Religions for Peace* and partners hosted the “Making Peace with Nature: Heeding the Call of Indigenous People” side event at COP26, focusing on the importance of protecting Indigenous peoples’ rights and spiritualities in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda: [Religious Leaders Affirm Commitment at COP26 to Safeguard the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to Solve the Climate and Deforestation Crisis \(3 December\)](#)
- Championing Freedom of Thought, Conscience & Religion
 - Advocacy
 - In response to a policy of forced cremation for all COVID-related deaths, *Religions for Peace* worked with the Sri Lanka Council of *Religions for Peace* (SLCRP) to advocate for more just and non-discriminatory policy: [Last Rites for the COVID-19 Victims \(8 February\)](#); [Rite of Burial for Victims of Covid-19 \(14 February\)](#)
 - *Religions for Peace*, along with its consortium partners, held a series of meeting to close out the European Union-funded project, Advancing Interreligious Dialogue and Freedom of Religions or Belief in South and Southeast Asia, that focused on a wide range of activities, that included enhancing local capacities to combat religious discrimination and prejudice.
 - Knowledge Management
 - At the Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue, *Religions for Peace's* World Council issued a Global Pledge, acknowledging their roles as guardians of faith and defenders of freedom of thought, conscience and belief – not only their own, but of and for all faiths: [Global Pledge by World’s Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Common Action for Peace \(4 October\)](#)
 - Capacity Building
 - *Religions for Peace* International supported a series of high-level dialogues, in which religious leaders, parliamentarians and civil society actors discussed the connections, gaps, and opportunities between the SDGs and various aspects of Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Belief. Thus far, four such events have been held:
 - [Applying a FoRB Lens to Achieve the SDGs \(23 September\)](#)
 - [Gender and FoRB: Opportunities for Synergies and Learning \(14 October\)](#)
 - [Education and FoRB: Nurturing Future Generations for Inclusive Societies \(11 November\)](#)
 - [Civic Space, Expression and FoRB: Realizing the Promise of SDG 16 to Build Safe, Inclusive Societies for All Our Identities \(9 December\)](#)
 - FoRB High-Level Dialogues in 2022 include:
 - [Health and FoRB: Promoting Health and Well-Being for All \(20 January\)](#)
 - [Climate Change and FoRB: Protecting Our Environment and Needs of All \(24 February\)](#)

- Strengthening Interreligious Education
 - Advocacy
 - Since 2014, the Tachibana Corporation Vavuniya Multi-Cultural Pre-School has employed teachers and provided education more than to underprivileged children of multi-ethnic and multi-religious backgrounds. In the programme year starting from September 2021, *Religions for Peace* supported 50 students from various cultural backgrounds and 3 teachers. In a critically tense situation of multi-culturalism and inter-faith dialogue, this project has been a testament to the importance of multi-religious education, and a means to break pervasive cycles of poverty and vulnerability.
 - Knowledge Management
 - *Religions for Peace*'s global movement is distinguished by its global leadership, Interreligious Councils, and interfaith women and youth networks, which are working at local, national, regional and global levels as changemakers. In order for us to benefit from the rich and wide expertise and resources within the *Religions for Peace* movement, we invite all our members to participate in the nomination and formation of our Roster of Experts.
 - Capacity Building
 - *Religions for Peace* and the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) held a Symposium on Youth and Faith in the 21st Century, and published a summary paper that features youth inputs on critical global agenda issues, notably peace, environmental matters, and humanitarian action: Youth Engagement with Religion and Faith in the 21st Century (16 December).
 - *Religions for Peace*, in partnership with Arigatou International and other organisations, held the Global Symposium on Ethics Education with an aim to prioritize ethics education to foster learning to live together and promote mutual understanding and respect across diverse communities.

- Fostering Multi-religious Collaboration & Global Partnerships
 - Advocacy
 - *Religions for Peace*, together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities worked with religious leaders and faith communities to influence positive social and behavioral change with and for children, families, and communities: Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families, and Communities (FPCC) and its Mind-Heart Dialogue Initiative (November and December 2021).
 - *Religions for Peace* and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) formed a Multi-Religious Council of Leaders in the build-up to the Global Refugee Forum in 2023: Multi-Religious Council of Leaders (13 April).

- Knowledge Management
 - *Religions for Peace* organised the launch of the book on “Religious Soft Diplomacy and the United Nations: Religious Engagement as Loyal Opposition”: Book Launch: Religious Soft Diplomacy and the United Nations (24 June with contributions from Prof. Azza Karam who wrote the first chapter of the book, “Religion at the United Nations: Challenges or Opportunities?”, and others.
 - *Religions for Peace* co-authored six global documents that serve as guides for religious leaders in COVID-19 responses: #FaithInAction Guidance Documents
- Capacity Building
 - *Religions for Peace*, in partnership with Religious Freedom and Business Foundation held a roundtable discussion on “Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships for Multi-Religious Action for Peace,” to stress the value of multi-religious collaboration in times of global crises: Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships for Multi-Religious Action for Peace (5 May).
 - *Religions for Peace* stood with the World Health Organisation (WHO) in stressing the importance of strengthening national responses to health emergencies through multi-faith collaboration: WHO and Religions for Peace Convene on Paramount Role of Multi-faith Cooperation on COVID-19 and Vaccine Efforts (19 March); The Role and Impact of Faith Actors in Global and National Advocacy for Vaccine Equity and Access (20 May); The Role and Impact of Faith Actors in Overcoming Barriers to COVID-19 Vaccination
 - *Religions for Peace* partnered with UNICEF and the Joint Learning Initiative to develop the Mind and Heart Dialogue Facilitator’s guide (available in English and French) as part of the global resources for the FPCC Initiative.



Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue, 2021

Building Peaceful, Just & Inclusive Societies

Fostering multi-religious collaboration in response to the world's most urgent challenges has only become more critical, as the needs of humanity and the earth have only been amplified by the pandemic and concurrent global crises such as climate change and armed conflict. *Religions for Peace* adapted to the changing situation and creatively implemented programmes that advance the Strategic Priorities within the context of such crises.

We mobilised as we always do: we convened – both in-person and virtually – leaders of the world's religious institutions, interfaith women and youth networks, policymakers, and civil society actors for a shared moment of hope and solidarity. We adapted our many existing and new partnerships (with multilateral, bilateral, and civil society institutions, including academic) and projects using this virtual modality, and thus made the programmes and the knowledge resulting from them more inclusive and accessible to our movement across the world.

The Multi-Religious Humanitarian Fund

In 2021, The Fund financed 21 multi-faith projects that are supporting religious communities' frontline efforts to aid those facing humanitarian crises.

The Fund has been a catalyst for the protection of the most vulnerable throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It reached 10,500 people with food packages, hygiene kits, and housing assistance. Other national projects helped enhance public health awareness, address hate speech and the rise of COVID-19 misinformation, and strengthen interfaith dialogue to alleviate ethnic and religious tensions. The Fund has also mobilised resources to meet the needs of today's "invisible victims" – women living with abusive partners, and children and the elderly suffering from caretaker neglect – through the provision of tele-health counseling, referrals to professional and psychiatric services, and support groups for women, children, and the elderly.

HAITI

Sustainable and experienced efforts led by Haitians for Haiti are sorely needed, according to Rev. Clement Joseph, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace-Haiti*, and this is precisely what *Religions for Peace-Haiti* provides. The Fund provided the resources for *Religions for Peace-Haiti* to launch its first digital advocacy campaign, reaching an estimated 150,000 people. Sewing machines have also been distributed to vulnerable families in various religious communities, facilitating economic independence for those unable to find work during the pandemic.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Fund supported 11 million residents of Kinshasa who are suffering severe poverty and unsanitary conditions, compounded by the threat of COVID-19. Kinshasa's religious communities of Catholics, Evangelists, Muslims, Kimbagusts, Bahai'es, and Protestants came together to educate the community about COVID-19 prevention, women-led entrepreneurship, and gender-based violence.

Building Peaceful, Just & Inclusive Societies



HELPING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HEAL OLD WOUNDS AND REGAIN THEIR VOICE.

Beginning in 1883, Indigenous children in many parts of Canada were forced to attend residential schools in forced assimilation programmes. Most of these schools were operated by churches and religious missions, and all of them prohibited the use of Indigenous languages and cultural practices. Over 100 years, 150,000 Indigenous, Inuit, and Metis children were interned at residential schools and many children suffered extreme violence and abuse. The recent discovery of mass, unmarked graves, where the bodies of children as young as three years old were secretly buried, confirms that thousands of children died in these schools.

In a [statement](#), we joined *Religions for Peace* leaders in Canada in support of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, bringing about processes of healing while also educating the Canadian public. We also acknowledged that the work of the Commission, which includes leaders of Indigenous spiritualities, coincides with successful advocacy for reclaiming of their historical lands and greater self-governance.

Many Indigenous communities have experienced a revival of their languages, cultural practices, religion, and spirituality, which we recognise and support as an important part of recovering from the historical wounds of disregard, disparagement, and oppression.

THE ROLE OF FAITH PARTNERS IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE.

Throughout history, religious leaders, faith-based organisations, and faith communities at all levels, have played a key role in health emergency preparedness and response, and in many places, in ongoing health service delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the important role faith partners, as trusted community leaders, play in mobilising community led action to protect, care for and advocate for marginalised or vulnerable people; sharing critical, accurate and tailored health information; and providing spiritual care, guidance, and support during times of crisis and uncertainty.

The [Global Conference on Strengthening National Responses to Health Emergencies](#) identified good practice examples of collaboration between *Religions for Peace*, the World Health Organisation, and the EPI-WIN Faith Communities of Practice to preparedness and response efforts to future public health emergencies. The event highlighted innovative response efforts in the areas of (i) Spiritual care during times of crisis, (ii) Country collaboration between WHO, faith partners and national governments, (iii) Trust and health histories, and (iv) Communication and advocacy for vaccine equity, access, and uptake.

Religions for Peace and faith partners, together with WHO, are working with and in support of national governments to achieve joint health goals, mitigate the negative effects of health emergencies, and help bring them to an end.

Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue



Religions for Peace International Youth Committee with Prof. Azza Karam at the Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders

Over 300 in-person and over 1,700 virtual participants from around the world came together for the Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue, hosted by *Religions for Peace*, Ring for Peace, and supported by the German Federal Foreign Office. The Conference brought together religious actors, youth leaders, policymakers, and civil society actors to discuss Peace and Security, the Environment, and Humanitarianism.

Currently, our human family is confronted with conflict and violence – from gender-based violence to religiously coated political violence and structural violence with local and global manifestations of injustice – as well as the environmental crisis of unsustainable economic and developmental patterns, the forced displacement crisis, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, *Religions for Peace's* World Council issued a Global Pledge, acknowledging their roles as guardians of faith and defenders of freedom of thought, conscience and belief – not only their own, but of and for all faiths – and reaffirmed their commitment to respond to these multiple crises through intergenerational partnerships among the world's religions communities and their institutions, governmental and inter-governmental organisations, and the community of diplomats worldwide.

Prof. Azza Karam moderated the youth debate on whether religious actors are uniquely helpful in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic so that faith leaders, policy makers, and the youth can ensure that environmental issues – linked to many of the crises, including the pandemic– are at the forefront of every discussion. Throughout the Conference, there was a strong emphasis on the indispensable value of the youth in intergenerational and inter-religious collaboration.



Participants of the Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders

Advancing Gender Equality



Participants of the Generation Equality Forum in Paris, 2021

ACCELERATING GENDER EQUALITY BY 2026. In 1995, 189 countries adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a bold and ambitious roadmap for gender equality. In the last 26 years, religious actors have been working from the local to the global levels as “culture creators and culture keepers” to transform gender norms, implement programmes, reform unjust laws and promote gender justice. Despite such efforts, lack of financing is widely understood to be a major obstacle for accelerating progress in advancing gender equality and enacting the women’s rights agenda of the milestone 1995 Beijing Conference.

UN Women and the governments of Mexico and France convened the Generation Equality Forum, in which a 5-year action journey to fulfill the promise of the Beijing Platform for Action and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals was launched. Prof. Azza Karam moderated the session on “Activating Faith, Feminism, and Freedom to Choose.” The Forum’s action-oriented agenda will be under-written by nearly USD \$40 Billion of confirmed investments as well as ambitious policy and programme commitments from governments, philanthropy, civil society, youth organisations and the private sector.

The monumental conclusion comes at a critical moment as the world assesses and addresses the disproportionate and negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women and girls.



Prof. Karam's interview with World Council of Churches for Thursdays in Black, 2021

UNITED AGAINST SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

While individuals, societies and authorities alike continue to struggle with the unprecedented changing reality that has emerged from the global COVID-19 pandemic, it has become increasingly clear that this crisis has also had cataclysmic implications on gender equality and the protection and upholding of women’s rights. Even before the pandemic, gender-based violence had been and still continues to be a tragic reality in every country across the globe. Too often it remains a hidden issue, without efficient and trustworthy support structures for those affected, leaving survivors silenced, blamed, or stigmatised.

Bearing this in mind, *Religions for Peace* joined the global Thursdays in Black campaign in partnership with the World Council of Churches and mobilised its global movement to raise awareness on rape and violence against women and advocate to end sexual and gender-based violence. In an interview, Prof. Azza Karam emphasized that we must leave no space for sexual and gender-based violence to be acceptable, accepted, or even condoned through the silence among and within faith communities.

On the 30th Anniversary of 16 Days of Activism, the *Religions for Peace* Women of Faith issued a statement calling upon actors across all sectors to keep survivors of gender-based violence at the heart of prevention and eradication efforts.

CSW65: Women in Public Life: Equal Participation in Decision-Making



Religions for Peace attempts to solve conflicts knowing that women are indispensable actors in peacebuilding, but they still only make up 13 percent of peace negotiators. In the words of Prof. Azza Karam, “When and where women of faith are included in at the peacebuilding table, they have the burden and responsibility to represent the interests of everyone – especially the most vulnerable.”

In empowering women of faith to break silences, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 65 met under the theme, “Women in Public Life: Equal Participation in Decision-Making.” The ensuing discussions emphasised the importance of women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Religions for Peace hosted a global consultation on “Redefining Leadership, Re-Envisioning Faith and Reconstructing Humanitarianism.” which brought together religious leaders of different faiths, representatives of *Religions for Peace* National and Regional IRC Councils, women of faith and youth networks, and partners from civil society, government, and the United Nations. Together with its partners, *Religions for Peace* highlighted how women leaders, working in and with religious communities, have confronted, enabled, challenged and inspired, based on actual work undertaken around the world, supported by the first-ever Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund established by *Religions for Peace*. At the end of the webinar, Prof. Azza Karam offered in closing, “When we listen from our hearts, it matters not that we are listening as men or women. It is about listening to the divine spark within us. We have an obligation to listen with compassion; that is the message of mercy. That will redefine leadership.”

“When we listen from our hearts, it matters not that we are listening as men or women. It is about listening to the divine spark within us. We have an obligation to listen with compassion; that is the message of mercy. That will redefine leadership.”

-Prof. Azza Karam

Nurturing a Sustainable Environment

For decades, climate change has had tragic implications on humankind and all forms of life, especially those already made vulnerable by poverty, hunger, forced displacement, and other systemic issues. *Religions for Peace* approaches the issue of climate change with the understanding that all religions have a shared moral, ethical, and spiritual responsibility to protect "our common home." Rainforests play a fundamental role in combating climate change, achieving sustainable development, and ensuring the survival of the planet and all of its inhabitants, especially the most vulnerable. Bearing this in mind, *Religions for Peace* educates, equips, and mobilises faith leaders to effectively address the deforestation crisis and inspire a worldwide movement for rainforest protection that is grounded in the values, ethics, and moral guidance of faith communities.

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) has been a key instrument in protecting the rainforest and its guardians – Indigenous peoples. It has been building the capacity of interreligious institutions in protecting the environment, raising awareness on environment degradation, and developing resources to equip those protecting rainforests. Along with other partners and with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Religions for Peace* continued the implementation of IRI country programmes in Brazil, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Indonesia, and Peru.

IRI-COLOMBIA

- delivered training and capacity building workshops in 36 local IRI chapters in the Amazon region, focusing on climate change, early childhood education of forest protection, river recovery and reforestation programmes, and creating inter-institutional environmental roundtables.
- conducted an extensive advocacy campaign, which significantly contributed to the passing of a bill that criminalised deforestation. During the Amazon Climate Forum, IRI-Colombia emphasized the need to address the threats to human rights posed by the fumigation of illicit crops and the causes of violence against environmental defenders.

IRI-PERU

- spoke on the "Use of Territory in the Amazon" and within this the defense and protection of forests and forest defenders and proposals for a healthy, sustainable, productive, and resilient Amazon. Participating candidates signed a Commitment for the Amazon, securing a promise to have IRI-Peru support and monitor their compliance on policies that advance protection and restoration of the Amazon.

Nurturing a Sustainable Environment

IRI-INDONESIA

- launched two new provincial chapters, IRI Riau and IRI East Kalimantan.
- mobilised a nation-wide “paperless campaign” to eliminate paper use across Muhammadiyah Universities, and a Love Forest campaign to raise awareness and visibility of the environmental, social, and economic threats posed by deforestation.

IRI-DRC

- launched a new chapter in the province of Equateur to mobilise moral urgency and spiritual resources in different religious communities to protect forests and ensure a sustainable future for the inhabitants of the province.
- engaged in a months-long campaign advocating for the adoption of a new law recognising the rights of Pygmy people in the country, including through videos of senior religious leaders calling for adoption of the law.

COP26: Together for Our Planet



Religions for Peace faith and strategic partners at COP26, 2021

“IRI was launched at the Nobel Peace Center in June 2017 as an international alliance that works to harness the moral influence of religions and their leaders for the protection of rainforests and the rights of Indigenous peoples. They go together: We protect our lungs, we protect Indigenous peoples.”

- Professor Azza Karam, “Making Peace with Nature: Heeding the Call of Indigenous Peoples” at COP26

Religious leaders from across faith traditions came together for an official event at the Glasgow climate conference (COP26) entitled “Making Peace with Nature: Heeding the Call of Indigenous Peoples.” The sessions explored how Indigenous peoples – north and south – share ways of life and traditional knowledge that all life on the planet depends on. We are thus confronted with the fact that there is no effective solution to the climate crisis without respecting and ensuring the rights and spirituality of Indigenous peoples. This is why religious and Indigenous leaders continue to forge a powerful alliance of mutual respect and cooperation that brings new energy and resources to the global effort to avert a global climate catastrophe.

Championing Freedom of Thought, Conscience & Religion



SEA-AIR Consortium Partners



Religious communities have a moral obligation to prevent violence and discrimination. For this reason, *Religions for Peace* and interfaith partners launched the [Southeast Asia: Advancing Interreligious Dialogue and Freedom of Religions or Belief \(SEA-AIR\)](#) project to enhance local capacities to combat religious discrimination and prejudice.

On June 1, the final conference of the SEA-AIR project was held to take stock of best practices and lessons learned in advancing social cohesion and freedom of thought, conscience and religion across South and Southeast Asia. Since January 2019, the project has contributed to an improved consensus and a conducive environment for the protection of freedom of religion or belief and for a peaceful coexistence of groups and individuals with different religious affiliations in Southeast Asia. Moreover, it enhanced local capacities to address discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief through interfaith understanding and mainstreaming at the country and regional level in South and Southeast Asian countries.

Religions for Peace International is supporting a series of high-level dialogues, in which religious leaders, parliamentarians and civil society actors explore the intersections between the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the role that parliamentarians and faith and belief leaders can play in addressing inequalities on account of religion or belief.

In "Applying a FoRB Lens to Achieve the SDGs," Prof. Azza Karam emphasized that the Freedom of Thought, Conscience & Belief - the fourth strategic goal of *Religions for Peace* - is existential freedom. In other words, it is the very foundation and guarantor of all other rights and freedoms, on which the SDGs are built upon. Prof. Azza Karam offered in closing, "If the very freedom to think, to own one's sense of consciousness and understand that of others, and to practice one's own religion are endangered because of this massive gap on an existential level, then none of the SDGs can be met."

Strengthening Interreligious Education



Countless studies and research initiatives, ranging from national to global efforts, delve into the complex relationship between youth (and youth engagement) and religion in the modern world. In many aspects, religious and spiritual dimensions inform, motivate, and activate youth within their communities, particularly on issues such as peacebuilding, environment and humanitarianism.

Religions for Peace and the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF), in collaboration with their strategic partners, hosted a symposium that brought together youth leaders, faith leaders, and top research and education institutions to explore the different aspects of youth engagement with religion in the 21st century. Participants explored the extent to which youth activism is fueled by the moral and ethical systems presented through their religious institutions. They further considered the ways their religious world views (whether their own or distinct) form youth understanding of their own place in the world and inform their interactions with it.



Education is a significant force for transformation; contributing to the empowerment of individuals and communities, fostering inclusion and social cohesion. It can serve as an equaliser to the society and help promote equitable development.

During an online global symposium, *Religions for Peace*, in partnership with Arigatou International and other organisations, held the Global Symposium on Ethics Education with an aim to prioritise ethics education to foster learning to live together and promote mutual understanding and respect across diverse communities.

Ethics education that promotes common values and enhances children's critical thinking can address issues of xenophobia, discrimination, hate speech, and foster in children their capacity to positively respond to the multiple ethical challenges in their societies. Investing in ethics education programmes and activities that promote dialogue, cultural and religious diversity, and interreligious learning acts as a way to protect children's rights, including freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of expression, in accordance with children's evolving capacities. This will also give children the possibility of growing and developing in an environment where they feel protagonists of their lives.

Fostering Multi-religious Collaboration & Global Partnerships



The G20 Interfaith Forum offers an annual platform where networks of religiously linked and faith-inspired actors engage on global agendas, within the broad framework of the SDGs and the G20 host country's agenda. The 2021 G20 Interfaith Forum was organized into four principal themes: the Environment, Foreign Policy and Religion, Education and Religious Diversity, and Religious Affairs and Peaceful Coexistence.



Professor Azza Karam at the G-20 Interfaith Forum, 2021

During the Forum, religious and government leaders stood together in remembrance of those killed in places of prayer. The somber occasion called to mind the commitment to protect Holy Sites, which *Religions for Peace* has stressed as critical to a true guarantee of the Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion. These leaders engaged in dialogue on a variety of topics, including justice, refugees, human trafficking, modern slavery, poverty, peace, and gender equality.

Global Interfaith Youth Network

The *Religions for Peace* global network is strengthened by the International Youth Committee (IYC), which leads our Global Interfaith Youth Network, and seeks to give voice to young religious leaders in their efforts for building lasting peace. The IYC comprises of 15 leaders representing the world's faith traditions from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean.



Religions for Peace Interfaith Youth at the G-20 Interfaith Forum, 2021

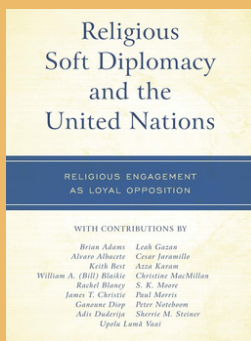
Religions for Peace partnered with A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY) to host the G20 Youth Interfaith Forum. With its focus on “Interfaith as Activism, Dialogue as Healing,” the event offered an opportunity to learn from the challenges and successes of multi-religious and interreligious youth-led efforts throughout the world, and a springboard for further action.

Religions for Peace Roster of Experts

Religions for Peace is more than an organisation. For 51 years, *Religions for Peace* has been a movement changing the world and challenging the status quo through our mutual conviction that religions are more powerful, inspiring, and impactful when they work together. *Religions for Peace's* global movement is distinguished by its global leadership, Interreligious Councils, and interfaith women and youth networks, which are working at local, national, regional, and global levels as changemakers.

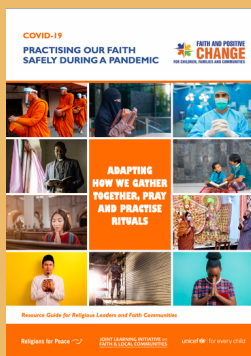
Religions for Peace continues to work at the frontlines of the world's most dire issues, so that no one will be left behind. In order for us to benefit from the rich and wide expertise and resources within the *Religions for Peace* movement, we invite all our members to participate in the nomination and formation of our Roster of Experts. The database of scholars, practitioners, and leaders in specific areas of competence will be a valuable resource for us as we continue the essential work for peace.

New Tools and Publications



Religious Soft Diplomacy and the United Nations:

Prof. Azza Karam writes the opening chapter of the book on "Religion at the United Nations: Challenges or Opportunities?" The central argument of this book is that expanded, yet measured, religious inclusion within the United Nations systems will strengthen social cohesion in the global community. The contributors demonstrate how communities become stronger when marginalised minority voices are included in public discourse. The book concludes with a call for the United Nations to adopt the posture of "loyal opposition," that is inherent in parliamentary democracies, to serve as a guideline for expanded religious engagement.



#FaithInAction Guidance Documents:

Religions for Peace co-authored six global documents that serve as guides for religious leaders and faith communities on the key issues and actions that they can take in preventing and addressing the COVID-19 and its secondary effects.



Youth Engagement with Religions and Faith in the 21st Century:

Religions for Peace, Georgetown University's Berkeley Center for Religions, Peace, and World Affairs, and the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYP), published a summary paper that features youth inputs on critical global agenda issues, notably peace, environmental matters, and humanitarian action

Religions for Peace

For over 50 years, *Religions for Peace* has brought together the world's religious institutions and faith communities to work together for peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. Religions for Peace is an organisation as well as a mission.

Through the decades, we have witnessed how multi-religious collaboration is a tipping point in securing human rights and dignity. All religions advocate for the most vulnerable among us, and thus not leaving anyone behind. Our over 90 national and 6 regional Interreligious Councils, or "IRCs," are unique multi-religious platforms which combine influence as well as the priceless social capital of religious leaders, religious institutions, and grassroots women and youth networks.

Global Interreligious Council Directory

AFRICA

Religions for Peace-African Council of Religious Leaders
Religions for Peace-Benin
Religions for Peace-Burkina Faso
Religions for Peace-Burundi
Religions for Peace-Cameroon
Religions for Peace-Cote d'Ivoire
Religions for Peace-Democratic Republic of the Congo
Religions for Peace-Ethiopia
Religions for Peace-Ghana
Religions for Peace-Guinea
Religions for Peace-Kenya
Religions for Peace-Liberia
Religions for Peace-Malawi
Religions for Peace-Mauritius
Religions for Peace-Mozambique
Religions for Peace-Nigeria
Religions for Peace-Sierra Leone
Religions for Peace-South Africa
Religions for Peace-Sudan
Religions for Peace-Tanzania
Religions for Peace-Uganda
Religions for Peace-Zambia
Religions for Peace-Botswana (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Central African Republic (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Comoros (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Madagascar (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Reunion Island (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Rwanda (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Seychelles (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-South Sudan (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Togo (In Formation)

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Religions for Peace-Middle East & North Africa Council of Religious Leaders
Religions for Peace-Iraq
Religions for Peace-Israel
Religions for Peace-Iran (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Palestine (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Tunisia (In Formation)

ASIA

Asian Conference of *Religions for Peace*
Religions for Peace-Australia
Religions for Peace-Bangladesh
Religions for Peace-Cambodia
Religions for Peace-China
Religions for Peace-Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Religions for Peace-India
Religions for Peace-Indonesia
Religions for Peace-Japan
Religions for Peace-Kyrgyzstan
Religions for Peace-Malaysia
Religions for Peace-Mongolia
Religions for Peace-Myanmar
Religions for Peace-Nepal
Religions for Peace-New Zealand
Religions for Peace-Pakistan
Religions for Peace-Philippines
Religions for Peace-Singapore
Religions for Peace-South Korea
Religions for Peace-Sri Lanka
Religions for Peace-Thailand

EUROPE

Religions for Peace-European Council of Religious Leaders
Religions for Peace-Albania
Religions for Peace-Austria
Religions for Peace-Belgium
Religions for Peace-Bosnia and Herzegovina
Religions for Peace-Bulgaria
Religions for Peace-Finland
Religions for Peace-France
Religions for Peace-Germany
Religions for Peace-Italy
Religions for Peace-Netherlands
Religions for Peace-Romania
Religions for Peace-Russia
Religions for Peace-Spain
Religions for Peace-United Kingdom
Religions for Peace-Croatia (In Transition)
Religions for Peace-Ireland (In Formation)

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

Religions for Peace-Latin America & the Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders
Religions for Peace-Argentina
Religions for Peace-Brazil
Religions for Peace-Chile
Religions for Peace-Colombia
Religions for Peace-Costa Rica
Religions for Peace-El Salvador
Religions for Peace-Guatemala
Religions for Peace-Guyana
Religions for Peace-Haiti
Religions for Peace-Honduras
Religions for Peace-Jamaica
Religions for Peace-Mexico
Religions for Peace-Panama
Religions for Peace-Paraguay
Religions for Peace-Peru
Religions for Peace-Suriname
Religions for Peace-Trinidad and Tobago
Religions for Peace-Barbados (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Bolivia (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Cuba (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Dominican Republic (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Ecuador (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Nicaragua (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Puerto Rico (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Uruguay (In Formation)
Religions for Peace-Venezuela (In Formation)

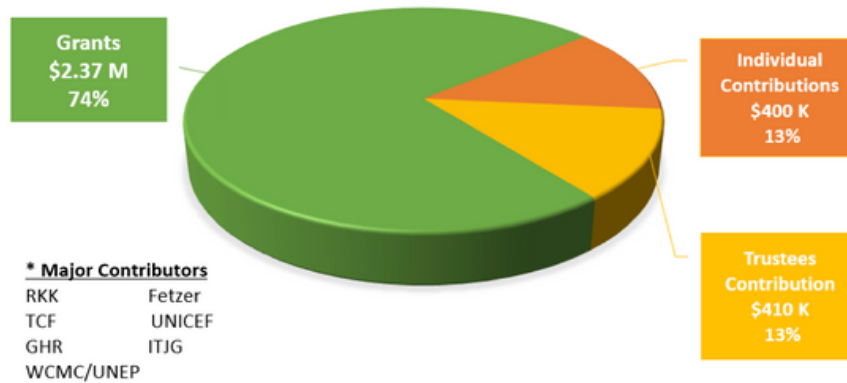
NORTH AMERICA

Religions for Peace-North America
Religions for Peace-Canada
Religions for Peace-United States of America

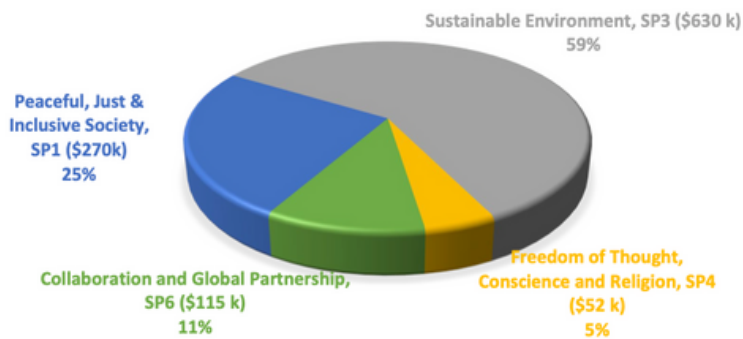
2021 Financial Report



2021 TOTAL RELIGIONS FOR PEACE REVENUE (\$3.184 M)*



2021 RELIGIONS FOR PEACE STRATEGIC PLAN FUNDINGS (\$1.067 M)





Religions *for* Peace

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