

Transcript: How Women of Faith Lead Global Change and Drive Shared Sacred Flourishing

Dr. Francis Kuria, Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*: I wish to thank you all – our distinguished guests, panelists, and friends. It is a profound honor to welcome you all to this conversation: “Women of Faith: Leading Change, Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls.”

Sister Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF, Ph.D., Associate VP of Program Operations & Head, Catholic Sisters, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation: When I think of Women of Faith, they are people who are impelled by their conviction, by faith to support the communities where they work.

Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi, Executive Director, Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers: Women of Faith, they are always in the front line, addressing all the issues that are facing our societies and communities.

Ms. Rose Njoka, Kenya Women of Faith Network: The Women of Faith, they are important because they are opinion shapers.

Sister Jane Wakahiu: They are most respected in their communities. They provide education, skills development in health. They work in health care spaces. They work in social service. Work service projects. We accompany particularly anti-trafficking issues.

Ms. Alessia Radice, Social & Behavior Change Specialist, UNICEF: Women of Faith are a critical component of social and behavior change, especially when we're talking about things like harmful practices -- like female genital mutilation or child marriage. These are practices that are really ingrained in the communities that they are associated with, with deep seated social norms. So in order to start shifting those, it's very important to work with communities through trusted entry points. And Women of Faith are exactly that.

Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi: And they are doing that because they are mobilized by their own virtues -- religious virtues -- and values for their own local context. They understand the local context better than anybody else.

Sister Jane Wakahiu: What I see the role of Women of Faith is that of mentorship, caring for each other, being counselors and support for other women, but also community. Remember, women are like calabashes: They possess wisdom, possess intellect, but they don't possess these for only themselves. We are there for the common good of the communities they live.

Rabbi Diana Gerson, Associate Executive Vice President, The New York Board of Rabbis: It is said that we are given two ears and one mouth for a reason. We should always listen twice as much as we speak. And I think women naturally are listeners. We hear -- we're listening to what's being said. We listen to the hearts of others. We're hearing their pain. Where their challenges, their difficulty, and we're problem solvers by design. How do I make more room at the table? More space in my life for somebody else's needs?