



DEVELOPMENT WITH FAITH

*Towards more effective partnerships between
the public sector and faith-based communities*



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INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD IS A FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

From a behavioural economics perspective, faith provides an undercurrent which influences culture and communities, and thus a plethora of choices that can range from the meals we eat, to the people we marry to the places we live to the politicians for whom we vote. Given that 83.6% of the world’s population considers itself affiliated with a faith (see chart below), much of the public sector, in and of itself, *is* a faith-based community.

If one looks towards predicted growth trends, population affiliations with faith groups are expected to grow at rates eclipsing that of unaffiliated groups. At the same time, it should be mentioned that “unaffiliated” need not in itself signify pure atheism, but rather a non-affiliation with an organized faith group. Thus, many individuals associated with “new age” spirituality and similar practices (e.g., those whom call themselves “spiritual but not religious”) may become lost within this broad definition.

In reviewing future trends, the prediction that about 86% of the world’s population will consider itself affiliated with a faith group by 2050 points towards the continuing importance of working with faith-based organizations (FBOs).

Size and Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups

	2010 POPULATION	% OF WORLD POPULATION IN 2010	PROJECTED 2050 POPULATION	% OF WORLD POPULATION IN 2050	POPULATION GROWTH 2010-2050
Christians	2,168,330,000	31.4%	2,918,070,000	31.4%	749,740,000
Muslims	1,599,700,000	23.2	2,761,480,000	29.7	1,161,780,000
Unaffiliated	1,131,150,000	16.4	1,230,340,000	13.2	99,190,000
Hindus	1,032,210,000	15.0	1,384,360,000	14.9	352,140,000
Buddhists	487,760,000	7.1	486,270,000	5.2	-1,490,000
Folk Religions	404,690,000	5.9	449,140,000	4.8	44,450,000
Other Religions	58,150,000	0.8	61,450,000	0.7	3,300,000
Jews	13,860,000	0.2	16,090,000	0.2	2,230,000
World total	6,895,850,000	100.0	9,307,190,000	100.0	2,411,340,000

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

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TRENDS AND INFLUENCERS REGARDING FAITH-BASED HUMANITARIAN AND PEACE-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

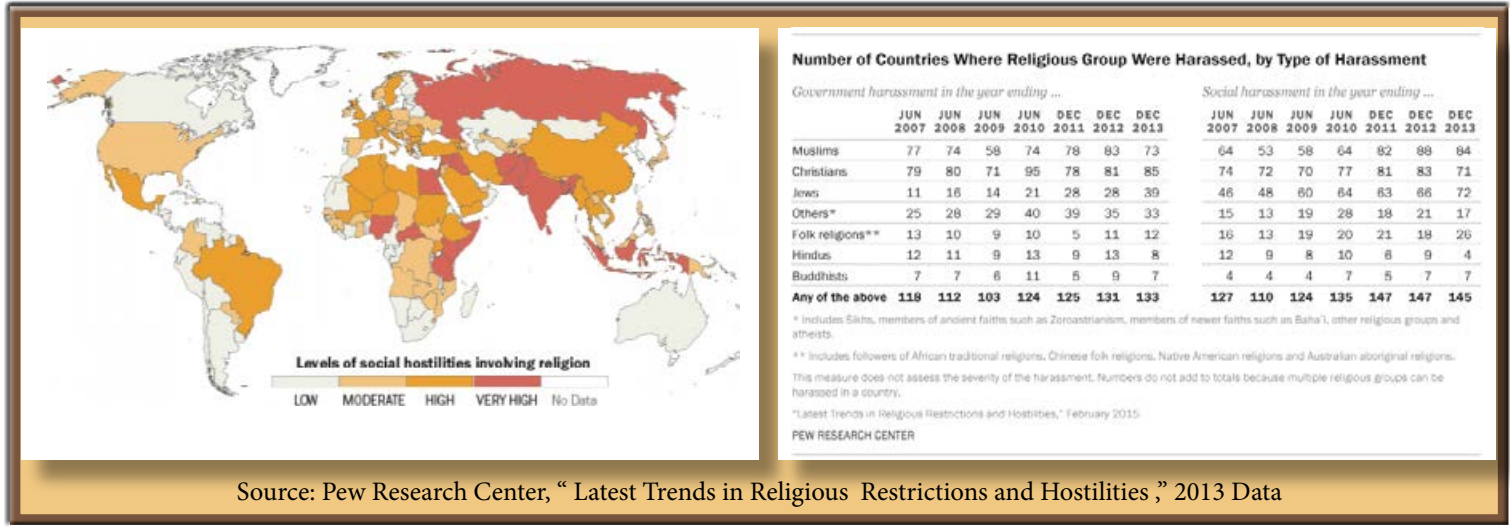
Turning Outwards

A true boon of modern society is the growing and laudable trend of faith groups turning outwards from their halls of prayer in order to provide humanitarian activities (which may serve to benefit people of multiple faiths). It should be noted that such activities have taken a compelling trajectory over recent decades, which moves beyond traditional provisions of schools and healthcare to direct activism concerning key issues, such as represented by HH Pope Francis's recent climate change summit.

Interfaith Collaboration and Peace-Building

The importance of interfaith collaboration must be viewed as another key and expanding factor in the development arena. Recent decades have seen the rise of inter-religious organizations including the United Religions Initiative, Religions for Peace, the Parliament of the World's Religions, the Elijah Interfaith Initiative, KAICIID, the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance and many others, which are working tirelessly to unite the faiths for peaceful endeavours.

When faith groups come together to determine peaceful solutions for the world's problems, there is greater hope for reduced instances of social hostilities involving religions. This is because such work, in and of itself, promotes enhanced mutual-understanding, sharing and fellowship as the faiths roll up their sleeves together to ensure improved lives and a better world. Aid beneficiaries similarly stand to share improved sentiments regarding alternate faiths, when assisted through interfaith endeavours or by members of a differing faith. Moreover, many interfaith initiatives promote crucial peace-building programmes, which serve to enhance non-violent communications and dispel conflict.



Source: Pew Research Center, "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities," 2013 Data



Influencing Behaviour Change

It is to the faith leaders that people turn in times of crisis, as well as in times of peace. They provide a moral and social compass from birth to death, and their words are greatly respected for their motivational power. Whilst one may not trust the verbiage of a local politician or a representative from an outside NGO, one will more likely trust the words of one's faith leaders, which can bring about lasting societal change.

According to a report by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, "Religious groups are particularly effective in bringing about behavioural change through their ability to link developmental interventions to underlying values and beliefs. Behaviours are driven by motivations, thoughts and feelings and ultimately by underlying values and beliefs. Thus, faith leaders, who have strong moral authority and credibility when speaking about beliefs, can strongly influence values in a population."¹

For these reasons, the crucial need for interfaith collaboration in the development arena, in achieving the SDGs, as well as in realizing a more peaceful world, cannot be understated.

From Halls of Divinity to Disaster Zones

Faith communities play a crucial role as the first on the ground and the last to leave in times of disaster, providing life-saving services, shelter and solace. Because they are trusted by the communities they serve, faith organizations can be looked to as important partners in providing field evaluations, assessments and programmes for the short- and long-term.

In addition, faith organizations continue to play a crucial role in the provision of direct assistance for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Understanding that many conflicts that induce refugee and IDP situations are faith based, the power of interfaith collaboration in such situations can prove exceptionally valuable.

A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED KEY AREAS OF COLLABORATION WITH THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND FAITH-ORGANIZATIONS

- Behaviour Change Communications
- Conflict Reduction and Peace-Building
- Anti-Poverty Interventions
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Response
- Social Activism Concerning Pressing Issues, Such as Climate Change
- Healthcare Service Delivery
- Education Service Delivery
- Refugee and IDP Programmes
- Realizing the SDG Agenda

¹ See report at <http://jiliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Building-more-effective-partnerships-between-public-sector-and-faith-groups.pdf>



Recommended Partnership Strategies

In order to ensure productive and cohesive partnerships between the public sector and faith groups, the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance recommends the following strategies be taken:

1. INTERFAITH TOGETHERNESS AND INCLUSION

The importance of interfaith togetherness and inclusion cannot be minimized, and should be a strategic factor in all relationships with faith organizations, so that peace-building and mutual-understanding may be realized on a broader scale. To achieve such togetherness and inclusion, we recommend strategic relationships with interfaith groups as well as guiding principles for all faith groups (see point 3). Where knowledge gaps are identified that prevent the adherence to such guiding principles, capacity building activities should be enacted (see point 2).

2. CAPACITY BUILDING

As described previously, faith organizations provide a wealth of resources, elicit a heightened sense of trust by communities and often have an active on-the-ground presence. To promote increased reach, improved programmatic success and heightened peace-building activities, we recommend that targeted capacity building endeavours be offered.

FROM WORSHIP TO WASH AND WASH FOR PEACE

As our world becomes ever-more water-scarce and densely populated, the subject of water in particular has become an increasingly-crucial issue. As Boutros Boutros-Ghali famously predicted, “The next war in our region will be over the waters of the Nile, not politics.” At the same time, every day, some 1,800 young children worldwide die mostly preventable deaths for the lack of healthy water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Said then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, “it’s not every day you find an issue where effective diplomacy and development will allow you to save millions of lives... Water is that issue.”

For such reasons, faith communities across the

world are coming together through the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA), to directly address pressing issues concerning the lack of sustainable and clean WASH. Because WASH issues can be solved today through a combined strategy of behaviour change communications and on-ground capacity development, GIWA is the world's first faith-based network that is working diligently with faith communities, NGOs, multilateral organizations, corporate leaders, politicians and others to help ensure that everyone, everywhere has access to the life-sustaining WASH provisions and knowledge they require to lead healthy, peaceful lives. In so doing, faith leaders play a central role in disseminating messages that are crucial for change.



Suggested Capacity-Building Activities Can Include

- Best field and DRR practices
- Non-violent communications and peace-building
- Behaviour Change Communications for sectors including WASH and healthcare
- Knowledge-sharing among FBOs, NGOs, Multilaterals and others'
- Sustainable Development and Environmental Stewardship
- Fundraising, grant maintenance and transparency
- External communications, including media outreach and the provision of case studies
- Project management
- Accountancy
- Interfaith studies and exchanges
- Human rights
- Policy skills
- Assessments and Evaluations
- And More



3. SETTING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles should be set in place ahead of formalizing partnerships between the public and faith-based sectors. These should include:

- Anti-prostelyzing
- Interfaith togetherness
- Peaceful speech and practices
- Unified speaking points
- Best practices, including fiscal management
- Transparency
- Adherence to the Rights of the Child, CEDAW and other Human Rights Conventions
- Environmental Sustainability

4. CREATE PROJECTS WITH A FAITH-BASED APPROACH AND MESSAGES

In the arena of Behaviour Change Communications, faith-based messages can serve as strong influencers within communities. Such messages can range from water conservation, to proper hygiene to the use of sanitary facilities and more, such as child safety, environmental sustainability, the acceptance of immunizations, etc. An interfaith component can help communities to appreciate the unity of messaging across all religions.

The above should be combined with capacity building activities that not only enable FBOs to promote changed behaviours but, when relevant, to also enable their communities to have access to that which they are promoting, such as clean water, toilets, immunizations, and more.

5. INCREASED MAPPING OF FBOs

FBOs should be mapped according to location, contact information and capacities, so that a broader network between FBOs and the private sector can be solidified, and new or improved development, peace-building and DRR strategies can be formulated.

6. INVITED PARTICIPATION IN KEY MEETINGS AND BRIDGE BUILDING

Given the growing importance of faith leaders in promoting behaviour change, offering on-the-ground interventions and more, FBOs should be enabled to play more central roles in key multilateral meetings in which policy agendas are set and maintained.

Bridge-Building activities should similarly be supported to decrease the gaps between the public sector and faith-based organizations. These can include special events set around development agendas, through which individuals from a wide range of backgrounds may be given the opportunities to learn, share and interact together.

In addition, FBOs should be considered for inclusion in staff training and capacity building programmes by multilateral organizations, to increase skill-sets and bridge-building opportunities.



7. ASSESSMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

Assessment and Evaluation (A&E) protocol should be established early and clearly within all partnership frameworks, including those with faith-based organizations. One should also look towards FBOs as strategic allies in assessing on-ground conditions, particularly after natural disaster or other crises, as many already have established, warm relationships with the members of their communities, and are often among the first responders in times of need.

Moving a step further, we would recommend the formation of a joint committee for the establishment of a standardized A&E protocol, which can be easily updated by partners on line, using their mobile phones/tablets, or by mail or in-person interviews. In such a way, much guesswork can be replaced with clear, productive and friendly communications, leading to productive outcomes on behalf of communities and individuals in need.

CONCLUSION

Said GIWA Co-Founder/Co-Chair, Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati in his message to the 2015 Religion and Sustainable Development Conference in Washington DC, “Faith has influenced our past. Faith will influence our future. Faith influences us as a global family. That is why it is crucial, if we are to solve the glaring crises of our future, that faith-based organizations and leaders play a central role, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, hand-in-hand, as one.”

The world, as we mentioned, is already a world of faith. Thus, it could be further concluded, the undercurrent of faith already silently lives within society’s public sectors. Through the simple acts of establishing guidelines ahead of time, alongside concentrated mapping, capacity-building, impactful messaging strategies and standardized A&E protocols, successful partnerships can be established that can go long and far towards ending needless suffering. The returns can prove long-lasting and beneficial for all.



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