

RELIGION & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Building Partnerships to End Extreme Poverty

Key Findings & Recommendations for Action

July 7-9, 2015
Washington, DC



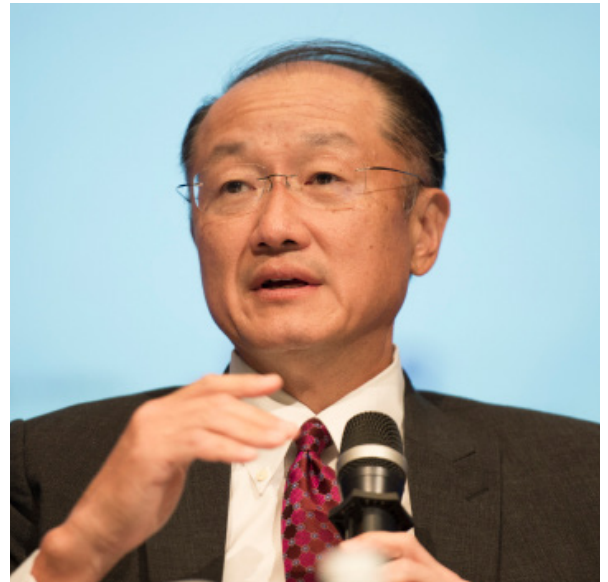
JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES



McKinsey & Company

“Faith-based organizations and religious communities are often doing the essential work on the frontlines of combatting extreme poverty, protecting the vulnerable, delivering essential services and alleviating suffering. We are looking to expand the World Bank Group’s partnerships with faith inspired organizations toward reaching our shared goal to end extreme poverty within a generation.”

JIM YONG KIM
President, World Bank Group



“Faith-based groups are oriented to the people, and development requires a people-centered approach.”

“We cannot change things with money alone. If this was the case, it would be easy to find solutions for the global challenges. Sustainability needs a transformation of politics and mind-sets.”

THOMAS SILBERHORN
Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ

The Sustainable Development Goals “call for a stepping up of what we do, how we partner with each other and our work to understand what is actually making a difference. It’s the goals and institutions and leaders on the ground that will ultimately make the difference. One of the things that we know is faith groups around the world are the providers, often the inspiration, the organization, indeed the capitalization of that which is necessary to accomplish these goals.”

ALEX THIER
Assistant to the Administrator, Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, USAID



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

1. The question is no longer whether religion matters for development. There is compelling evidence that faith-based and religious organizations contribute added value in the field of development—especially in health, education, and disaster relief. The question now is: how to systematically include the potentials of religious organizations for development, and according to what principles and criteria?
2. As a basis for effective partnership for development, religious literacy for development actors and development literacy for faith-based actors should be increased. It is the responsibility of each donor to identify strategies for raising religious literacy, and to start with implementing measures according to their specific contexts. Faith-based and religious organizations wishing to partner in development activities have the responsibility to understand and contribute to development priorities, and to meet to common standards of accountability, transparency and impact monitoring.
3. To facilitate the full and sustainable engagement of the potentials of religion in development, institutional coordinating mechanisms amongst like-minded bilateral and multilateral donors, and among religious actors are required. Preliminary evidence for effective cross-sector collaboration is available, and mechanisms and methodologies can be adapted to scale up partnership between public sector and religious and faith-based organizations. Ongoing work to expand and disseminate the evidence base for religion in development is essential.
4. There is consensus that a “Do-no-harm-approach” regarding religion is not sufficient. The wisdom of religion has to be considered to ensure that sustainable development is broadly based on shared universal values that contribute to equality, peace and freedom. The discourse on religion and development can play an important role in developing a more value-oriented development policy, a culture of cooperation and a more equitable way of living for all.

On July 7-9, 2015, 140 international development policy makers, academics, and leaders of religious and faith-based organizations assembled in Washington, D.C. for the conference, Religion & Sustainable Development: Building Partnerships to End Extreme Poverty. Conference participants came together to discuss the latest evidence on effective partnerships between public sector and religious and faith-based organizations and to develop actionable recommendations to strengthen collaboration.

After welcoming remarks from conference co-hosts, the conference opened with the launch of the landmark **LANCET SERIES ON FAITH-BASED HEALTH-CARE**, the first Series by this medical journal documenting the contributions of faith to healthcare. Presentations by lead authors in the *Lancet* Series spoke to the available evidence for faith contributions, the controversies in faith and healthcare, and the opportunities and need for greater collaboration with the public sector and faith groups.

The second day of the conference began with a call to action from high-level **PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP** to develop more effective, evidence-based partnerships between the public and faith sectors. Public sector panelists underscored the necessity of engaging with religious communities in order to end extreme poverty and achieve the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals.

Honing in on concrete policy challenges and opportunities, the report **BUILDING MORE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND FAITH GROUPS**, produced by McKinsey & Company and commissioned by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities, presented a practical, four-part framework for strengthening collaboration. The report, based on the results of 40 interviews with policy makers and leaders of faith-based organizations, guided the design of the conference and helped frame discussions on recommendations for strengthening partnerships.

In response to the policy perspectives of the morning, the **RELIGIOUS AND FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES PERSPECTIVES** session focused on the moral imperative to reduce human suffering and the distinctive assets of religious communities to development. Religion's unique power to transform mindsets and behavior, build relationships, and ensure accountability were brought to center stage. The panelists also highlighted potential areas of growth: development of a faith-inspired approach to evidence, increasing engagement with faith communities at the local level, and strengthening operational capacity of faith-based organizations.

The eleven representatives of the **MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL PERSPECTIVES** panel showcased pioneering examples of partnerships, addressed challenges encountered in collaboration, and commented on changes desired within their agencies. Obstacles cited to systematic public sector engagement with religious groups included structural and functional mismatches, dissimilar approaches to data, evidence and measurement, ignorance and prejudice against religious assets, and lack of representation of religious perspectives in program and policy design.

Working sessions on **HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING, EBOLA & HIV, SEXUAL & GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, HUMANITARIAN**

ASSISTANCE & DISASTER RELIEF, and **LARGE SCALE ENGAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS & FAITH-BASED GROUPS FOR DEVELOPMENT** presented broad overviews of evidence, specific case studies of partnerships, and framings, challenges, and summaries by policy makers. At the heart of each session were small group discussions aimed at producing session-specific actionable recommendations.

The panel on **RELIGION & POLITICS** explored the legal and political tensions of engaging with religious groups, including combating violent extremism, promotion of religious freedom, prevention of harmful practices among differing viewpoints and values, consequences of unbalanced engagement with diverse religious actors, and cautions against instrumentalization.

The conference concluded with a working session that generated cross-cutting actionable recommendations across four broad categories: **1)** Understanding the distinctive contributions of religious actors to development, **2)** Building upon a foundation of mutual learning and respect, **3)** Strengthening structural mechanisms for intra-faith and cross-sector partnerships, and **4)** Strengthening the evidence base.



Religion & Sustainable Development Conference Participants

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:

Strengthening partnerships between public sector and religious and faith-based groups

DEVELOPMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Conference participants were tasked with generating session-specific recommendations in five thematic working sessions: Health Systems Strengthening, Ebola & HIV, Sexual & Gender-based Violence, Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief, and Large Scale Engagement of Religious & Faith-based Groups for Development. Each working session followed a similar process designed to stimulate the generation of actionable recommendations: opening and closing framings by policy makers, overview of evidence, case study presentations with brief commentary from pre-selected experts, and facilitated small working group discussions followed by report out of recommendations.

Conference participants were pre-arranged into groups of 10 during each of the thematic working sessions. Each group contained a mix of policy makers, public sector leaders, and academics. The aim was to have diverse groups of participants of different religions, genders, and nationalities. During each of the working sessions, participants were allotted discussion time to formulate one to two recommendations for building effective partnerships in each specific thematic area. Volunteer facilitators led the group discussion and captured the recommendations using note-taking templates. At the end of the session, each small group reported out their principle recommendations to the broader group. All small group recommendations resulting from the working sessions were collected at the end of the session.

In the Closing Session of the conference, conference participants were asked to reflect in small groups on the previous sessions and aforementioned recommendations. Following a moderated discussion among all participants, small groups then produced general recommendations for building more effective partnerships between public sector and religious and faith-based groups.

ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

After the conference, all conference sessions and recommendations from working sessions were analyzed to produce session-specific recommendations and general, cross-cutting recommendations.

To produce the Session-specific Recommendations, all recommendations produced from the session's small groups were analyzing for repeated themes. Session leaders were also asked to review the recommendations produced from their sessions. The resulting Session-specific Recommendations are located at the end of each working session section in the Conference Proceedings. A full list of small group recommendations resulting from the working sessions is available online.

Cross-cutting recommendations were produced from the recommendations generated from the Closing Session reflection. These closing recommendations were further built upon by reviewing each working session's recommendations and analyzing for repeated themes across working sessions. Finally, repeated themes and recommendations were extracted from the conference panel sessions: Public Sector Leadership, Religious & Faith Communities Perspectives, Multilateral & Bilateral Perspectives, and Religion & Politics.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Below we summarize recommendations, and quote several verbatim, which cut across thematic areas. The resulting Session-specific Recommendations are located at the end of each working session section in the Conference Proceedings.

I. FRAME THE CASE: UNDERSTAND AND COMMUNICATE THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FBOS IN DEVELOPMENT

- Public sector should be informed about and recognize the added value and distinctive assets of the religious community.
- Public sector should not seek to secularize religious communities or instrumentalize religious communities for their own objectives.
- Religious communities should clearly articulate and proactively communicate their distinctive assets and added value to public development organizations. Religious organizations can help secular agencies to comprehend their mission by being explicit about their beliefs, values, and work.
- Both public and religious sectors should understand the history of religious communities' contributions to the MDGs, and build off the lessons learned to communicate how religious communities can most fully contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.
 - “At the Religion & Sustainable Development Conference, we have received a synopsis of how faith-based organizations contributed to the MDGs. The synopsis should answer the how, the what, and the why in order to present the case for their continuing contribution to the SDGs.”
- Religious groups should actively seek out opportunities to engage in activities that they are uniquely suited, and public sector entities should support the religious communities' partnership in those areas.
 - Religious communities are uniquely suited to advocate against corruption in the public sector.
 - Religious communities should hold their governments to account for the provision of health and other social services.
 - Public sector should recognize the powerful role religious communities can play in providing psychosocial services for mental and social health, and expand the religious communities' capacity to provide these resources.

II. BUILD ON A FOUNDATION OF MUTUAL LEARNING AND RESPECT

- Effective partnership must be grounded in mutuality and reciprocity. Leaders of faith groups and public officials should approach partnership as equals, aware of the assets and contributions on both sides.
- We must challenge prejudices about others' beliefs and values, especially those that may be perceived as obstacles to partnership.
- Secular and religious groups should be open and explicit about their own values in order to identify common ground for partnership. Even when there is no apparent overlap, taking account of faith context can be beneficial, providing partners will explicitly agree how they will act.
- Encourage “faith literacy” among public sector groups. FBOs should increase “development literacy,” understanding the needs, constraints, operations and perspectives of public sector entities.
 - “We could set up an international academy for faith leaders and faith actors on interreligious ethics for sustainable development, and we could open up part of the academic period for non-religious developmental actors to partake.”

- Conduct context analysis of the religious landscape—traditions, actors, institutions—that can provide basic knowledge for who to approach and how to form questions for working with communities and existing networks, and how to best deliver messages in development work (e.g., a directory of faith organizations/resources at the local level).

III. STRENGTHEN STRUCTURAL MECHANISMS FOR INTRA-FAITH AND CROSS SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

INTRA-FAITH:

- As a foundation for effective partnership with public sector leadership, it is recommended that interfaith/inter-religious councils be strengthened to improve coordination, build relationships and increase local advocacy. Strong representative councils should include non-aligned or networked religious groups (such as indigenous and traditional ones e.g. African Instituted Churches) and representatives of all key local religious groups, and should counter Christian bias.
- Faith-based organizations can be more proactive in presenting to government entities their capacities and interest in collaboration, and in seeking adequate representation in national planning processes.
- Ahead of the SDGs, convene to advise national development networks of private, public, and civil society actors on how to best map, approach, and engage with faith-based actors at the national level.
- Faith-based organizations should build their own capacity to partner with public sector entities.
- Faith groups can better leverage their privately raised financial resources as a basis for effective partnership.

CROSS-SECTOR:

- Create regional or in-country cross-sector platforms of government, FBOs, and other local players for coordination of data-driven dialogue. Topics could include health financing, impact measurement, principles for effective activity, research on existing models of interfaith group engagement. The platform should agree upon a coordinated set of priorities.
- Faith communities should be involved from the beginning of program and policy creation and implementation. Umbrella associations or networks may help in facilitating coordination between public sector and religious leaders.
- Faith organizations should approach partnerships with public sector bodies as co-investors.
- Replicate and adapt dialogue at a country level and link to the realization of the SDGs to encourage deeper buy-in from country governments who will be crucial for successful implementation of SDGs.
- Multilaterals and bilaterals should commit to finding ways to engage more systematically with FBOs at both the local and global level, and not only when it is easy or convenient.
- Multilaterals and bilaterals should help to promote capacity of local FBOs to work with the public sector (negotiating contracts, navigating procurement policies, financial management).
- Public sector should develop contracting standards suitable for local faith communities.

IV. STRENGTHEN THE EVIDENCE BASE

- Compile for each stakeholder a guide as to why, how, and what evidence needs to be developed, and summarizing what exists already. “We need a clear stakeholder analysis of the different evidence needs of different partners.”
- Develop and propose a theoretical framework with clear definitions of religious activity and contributions in public health, and build capacity to assemble and disseminate evidence about that.
- Gather, analyze and disseminate different kinds of evidence and human stories from all faith organizations that is also acceptable to bilateral and multilateral funders, to systematically showcase qualitative impact and build evidence base; develop a library of high quality standardized case studies.
- Develop faith-inspired measurement and metrics, and a faith-inspired understanding of evidence. Develop indicators for transformation or hope generation, and measure them in numerical terms. These should be configured in a way to tease out the distinctive contribution of faith-based groups.
- Ensure a comprehensive directory of faith resources exists in each community and is kept updated in case of crisis. Directories should be developed in consultation with the faith community, and include faith based health and other service delivery, congregational networks and their religious leaders, and faith based NGOs
- Document faith-based financing for development.
- Document and learn from prior crises and events - e.g., HIV/AIDS.
- Develop tools to measure effectiveness and success of cross-sector partnerships.
- Learn more about impact of inter-religious collaboration on development challenges to serve as model for bilateral agencies to use.

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Create robust policy frameworks, including contracting mechanisms and improved MOUs, to professionalize relationships and improve accountability.
2. Engage in data-driven dialogue with local governments, FBOs and other community organizations to agree on a coordinated set of priorities.
3. Broadly engage faith leaders to proactively shape health behaviors and attitudes (i.e., to focus on prevention).
4. Invest in developing the skills of locals, including public sector employees, to ensure sustainability, improve quality and provide community insurance
5. Adopt innovative financing mechanisms to improve service quality and retain local ownership
6. Appreciate the distinctive assets of FBOs, including speed and reach, and be adaptable and creative in policies to expand their funding, when appropriate
7. Encourage religious leaders to be more open and proactive in identifying and tackling corruption in faith-based facilities
8. Include non-traditional health quality outcomes (e.g. hope and dignity) in evaluation of FBHPs services

EBOLA & HIV KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Document and draw on the lessons learned, tools expertise and existing mechanisms for partnership with FBOs from HIV and other diseases in preparing and planning for future epidemics/crises (e.g. the involvement of PLHIV/Ebola Survivors and addressing fear stigma and discrimination early on).
2. Improve response time at the onset of crises by quickly engaging FBOs already involved in development activities that are often long term, trusted service providers and embedded in the community.
3. Put in place a preparedness plan for emergencies/crises, including engagement of communities and faith leaders with strong linkages between national, district, and community networks.
4. Ensure FBOs are represented in government processes at national and district level to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate epidemic/crises responses.
5. Conduct collaborative, multi-sector (including religious sector) needs and capacity assessments in advance of crises.
6. Establish robust and effective relationships with traditional leaders/healers who may not be part of organized religious structures in order to work with them in future crises.
7. Develop best practice tools (e.g., sermon guidelines on Ebola) and approaches to ensure that FBOs are prepared for outbreaks of infectious diseases/crises.
8. Include religious and community participants in developing, shaping and delivering culturally sensitive messages to communities in times of epidemic or crisis.
9. Build the capacity of faith leaders and health response staff to partner more effectively in health and crisis situations.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & DISASTER RELIEF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Means of strengthening engagement with local faith communities should be established as a major strand of discussion in preparation for – and in the agenda of – the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, May 2016.
2. Faith-based organizations should articulate more clearly the added value of engaging with religious groups and communities in terms of reach and/or quality of programming. The public sector should consider the wisdom of religion in developing a new framework for humanitarian & disaster relief.
3. In early 2016, a global platform, including all major faith communities, INGOs, donors, and key UN-actors, should be brought together to create synergies between humanitarian and development actors and develop a road map for the reconstruction of civil society structures in Syria.
4. Strengthen the resilience and capacity of FBOs responding to disasters, including through training and certification of FBOs in Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS).
5. Post-disaster response must include the holistic needs of a community including psycho-social & spiritual support, which restore normalcy and build trust.
6. A formalized mechanism could be created within public funders operating in disaster-prone areas to allow small, local FBOs to register and be part of a database who can quickly be mobilized after a disaster.
7. Encourage, lobby, and insist the US CDC support and stimulate mapping efforts at WHO to do real global health mapping inclusive of FBOs in situations and communities in health and humanitarian services.

SEXUAL & GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a framework for engagement between faith leaders, government and other key stakeholders similar to the UNAIDS framework for engaging with faith for HIV and AIDS.
2. Support the transfer of SGBV policy and evidence from a national level to local/community levels through the engagement of local faith leaders.
3. Mobilise and enable Faith leaders advocate for appropriate recognition and response to SGBV in laws (e.g., rape not recognized in DRC law)
4. Provide training for religious leaders to:
 - Discuss narratives against inequality & SGBV through theology (i.e., contextual bible stories, “Islamic reason” for gender equality)
 - Distinguish between religion and culture
 - Remove stigmas about sexuality, sexual violence and related issues
 - Provide inter-religious training
5. Support creation and application of clear and appropriate policies against sexual harassment and SGBV within faith communities and institutions.

6. Develop and provide context-specific tools and strategies to raise awareness, train and mobilize communities. Ensure material is tailored to various groups (i.e., youth, women, men, religious leaders) and includes faith/scripture
7. Support the creation of safe spaces within faith communities for sharing experiences, exploring challenges and promoting best practices in building trust, awareness and commitment to the most vulnerable.
8. Promote positive leadership role models on gender justice and invest in such initiatives in schools, communities and faith centers

SCALE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Take a long-term view to funding and programming to build trust in local communities; sustained behavioral change and impact requires long-term, trust-based relationships
2. Work with local and national faith leaders in program design and implementation
3. Design procurement instruments to fund local faith-based organizations/consortia to facilitate scale-up; encourage collaboration rather than fragmentation
4. Review and test malaria platforms to see if these platforms can be leveraged for other issues or solutions
5. When FBOs scale-up programs, the information system used to measure programs towards targets should be adjusted to accommodate the changes
6. Collect and communicate evidence for interventions that have successfully scaled; openly discuss and learn from programs that did not successfully scale up
7. Develop faith-inspired measurement and metrics, and a faith-inspired understanding of evidence. Develop indicators for transformation or hope generation, and measure them in numerical terms. These should be configured in a way to extract the distinctive contribution of faith-based groups.
8. Incorporate measurement into the beginning stages of program design