

**PRESS ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Faith leaders, aid agencies around the world join forum on localizing humanitarian response

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA (19 October 2017) – Following the inspiration from World Humanitarian Summit, over 140 [participants](#) representing multiple local and global faith networks, faith-based organizations, aid agencies, policy makers, and government representatives have participated in a forum to strengthen partnership and networks in [localizing humanitarian response](#). The event happened in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 16-19, 2017.

The forum gathered faith leaders to collaborate with humanitarian response and aid agencies to provide holistic support to faith leaders – training, financial, advocacy. It also highlighted the significance of women’s involvement across faith networks in all aspects of humanitarian work.

In a three-day event, more than 50 different panelists from all over the world, presented challenges and best practices on engagement coming up with evidence-based recommendations to scale-up local partnerships in improving humanitarian aid.

Majority of the faith leaders and agencies have affirmed that in times of emergencies, faith leaders are the first main responders, even if they are affected themselves.

Dr. Theresa Carino of Amity Foundation, from Nanjing China recalled the recent quake in China, where religious leaders - who were also affected, immediately set up tents, and provided food to the survivors. “Humanitarian work is about rebuilding communities. It’s all about giving the base to reconstruct and recreate the people who are affected by the crisis,” says Dr. Carino.

About 35 diverse international faith networks were present, and shared their previous experiences in responding to humanitarian crisis with local faith actors.

“As part of disaster preparedness we should implement evidence-based and scripturally founded programs for faith leaders and faith communities to address social norms and harmful practices which directly affects children,” says Christo Greyling from World Vision.

Six main topics were discussed in the forum, including: conflict and peace-making, disaster response, refugees and forced migration, disaster risk reduction and resilience, gender-based violence, and children and health.

As a take away, participants from local faith actors, international faith-based organizations and religious networks are bringing home a unified Call to Action that specifies key actions at global, national, and local levels. It also identifies entry points for other humanitarian actors and partners to engage in the work of local faith actors.

Some of the recommendations in the group include: contextualization of humanitarian terminologies, providing more platforms for sharing models, best practices, capture validated experiences and promote to the government, agencies for support, providing more funds to

support local faith actors, maximizing existing platforms for education and awareness opportunities and create consortium to have easy access of information and among others.

Reverend Ebenezer Joseph, leader of the National Christian Council, co-chair with Venerable Banagala Upatissa Thero of the local forum committee, challenged all the participants in the forum. “Let’s go on this journey with hope. It doesn’t matter which faith and organization we came from. We have many roles to break down. Let’s go in faith, as prisoners of hope, starting the journey together, and believing the resources so we become compassionate companions for the people who are in need.”

This forum is organized by the local host committee in collaboration with international planning committee with support from GHR Foundation, USAID, World Vision, Islamic Relief USA, Church of Sweden, KAICIID Dialogue Center, ADRA International, Episcopal Relief and Development, Soka Gakkai International, Finn Church Aid and Act Alliance, Religions for Peace, World Evangelical Alliance.

For media interviews contact:

Jean Duff

President of Partnership for Faith and Development

Contact number: +12025508336

Email: jeanduff@pfaithdev.org