

G20I Fellows and Youth Forum – 8 October 2020

Topic 5

Fellows Partnerships and Commitments

A. Background

- Fellows around the world have an expertise and commitment to developing partnerships to promote the goals of civil society: for example, in the arenas of conflict resolution, the promotion of social justice, human rights, health provision, combatting climate change and the promotion of the freedom of religion.
- These partnerships and commitments have become vital in the last few months as the world has experienced a global pandemic resulting in the recorded fatalities of over one million people. These partnerships have become a priority for those overseeing the UN Sustainability Development Goals.

B. Challenges: SDG 17. Revitalise global partnerships for the SDG Goals

➤ Religious and multi-faith partnerships

- *How can religious and multi-faith partnerships contribute to the SDG. No 17?*
- *What are examples of successful coalitions among faith-based organisations and secular organisations?*
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals promote the concept of multi-stakeholder partnerships. This is highlighted in SDG 17 which amongst other forms of partnership promotes multi-stakeholder partnerships, the very area of core expertise of both the KAICIID Fellows, their institutions and networks.
- The targets under SDG17 most relevant to the KAICIID International Fellow Network include the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships to tackle and promote the aims of the SDG blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future and to end poverty and other deprivations, improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth whilst tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.
- The SDG define the work of KAICIID's Fellows globally in terms of their ability to forge new multi-stakeholder partnerships that at times can access both communities and individuals more nimbly than the private or public sector. In working with the private and public sector civil society, in particularly the faith sector has become a willing and effective partner that has proved its worth in recent months following the COVID—19 outbreak.
- A **multi-stakeholder partnership** is defined in SDG 17 as:

*17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise,*

*technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries*

*17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships*

- KAICIID Fellows have developed relationships between civil society and the public sector that **has strengthened in the light of COVID-19**.
- Our fellows have developed partnerships to develop multi and Interfaith partnerships to deliver and contribute to alleviation of poverty, the promotion of **environmental goals, social justice** and provide **support to communities and individuals** especially during the global pandemic.
- In Argentina and other Latin American countries, during the COVID-19 crises, religious organizations strengthened previously existing multireligious partnerships, to provide food assistance in community centers, and distributing food aid to each home. Every time the economy goes down, it implies the affection of Human Rights. The global depression highlighted the way in which private partnerships, including religious and multifaith organizations, are relevant to **fill in the gaps of the public sector**.
- In many countries, even places of worship were made available to provide different social services to the people affected both by the pandemic and the economic crisis. Religious leaders and institutions need to be **listened and included** in discussions as **development partners** to prevent further crisis and to build resilience and solidarity on their respective communities, not just when certain crisis arise. A progressive involvement of them in development debates and tables could also enhance their commitment to a more professional assessment of indicators.
- In Sri Lanka, an Interfaith Parliamentarian Committee created the conditions for a formal dialogue between policymakers and religious leaders. This kind of initiatives can create **awareness of the contribution** of religious leaders, institutions and communities **to the achievement of the SDGs**.
- In Myanmar, a program based on education for teachers from different faith backgrounds brought an increase in the understanding about one another, contributing to build stronger relationships. **Religious literacy** should be **part of development agenda**, to build common citizenship through a deeper understanding and acceptance of the religious and cultural diversity of our communities.

➤ **Rule of law and religious rights**

- *How can multifaith partnerships promote human rights and enhance rule of law?*
- *What structural provisions need to be adopted to enhance partnership between Fellows institutions and policy makers to promote human rights and enhance rule of law?*
- Lord Williams (the Magdalene and former Archbishop of Canterbury) stated in his essay on the *Religious Liberties and the need for moral universalism* (2018) (1) that “rather than allowing human rights and religious conviction to drift further apart, we should as a matter

of urgency be seeking to clarify their significance for one another, so that religious faith does not slip into theocratic tyranny and human rights language does not become an abstract charter of claims. A better understanding of how the law as a matter of fact deals with religious diversity and conscientious reservation will help; so will the admission that moral universalism has a history, and one in which religious categories have played a decisive role”.

- At the U.S. Institute of Peace, the religion & inclusive societies program has convened a series of workshops for U.S. **policymakers and practitioners** focused on **religious actors' roles** in preventing and countering violent extremism. These half-day sessions allowed practitioners and religious actors to discuss with one another and with U.S. government actors some of the **challenges, opportunities, and best practices** to best work together effectively in this space.
- KAICIID Fellows are committed to the promotion of human rights and the enhancement of the rule of law. Human dignity and the respect of other is a golden thread that links the great religions of the world. There is a need for faith communities to reinforce human rights as much as there is a **need for human rights institutions to reinforce the role of faith communities** to be able to act freely and in concert with human rights defenders.
- Although we all agree about the urgency of addressing violent extremism and violence in the name of religion, the international community should not underestimate the commitment of religious communities with Human Rights and with the development of common citizenship around the world. In this sense, some narrow and state-centric perspectives need to develop a **wider understanding of religion** to acknowledge how partnerships with religious leaders and institutions can enhance rule of law.

### C. Recommendations

1. To include religious leaders, FBOs and multireligious institutions as development partners, involving them in multi-stake partnerships aimed at specific SDGs, at local, national and international level.
2. To improve the awareness by policymakers of religious communities' contribution to development
3. To improve the FBOs commitment to professional assessment of indicators and result based management of their social projects aimed at the SDGs.
4. To include religious literacy in the development agenda in order to build common citizenship through a deeper understanding and acceptance of the religious and cultural diversity of our communities.
5. To reinforce the role of faith communities to be able to act freely and in concert with human rights defenders at international human rights institutions.
6. To involve policymakers and practitioners in dialogue sessions with religious leaders to identify challenges, opportunities and best practices to best work together in peacebuilding activities.

7. To enlarge the perspective of the Preventing Violent Extremism and Countering Violent Extremism (PVE/CVE) frameworks within a wider scope that takes into account multi-track diplomacy strategies as well as the possibilities of conflict transformation through interreligious and intercultural dialogue, addressing conflicts at local level and through regional multilateral organizations (2).

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## References

- (1) Ferstman Carla & Tony Gray (eds.), Contemporary Human Rights Challenges. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Continuing Relevance, London: Routledge, 2018.
- (2) Cf. Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, "Alternative Approaches to Transforming Violent Extremism", in Austin, Beatrix & Hans J. Giessmann (eds.) Transformative Approaches to Violent Extremism, Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2018.

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