



#### **4. Governance and Accountability: Fighting corruption in the COVID-19 emergencies**

*July 10, 2021*

Addressing corrupt practices is a continuing G20 priority, and different G20 engagement groups have highlighted the need for concerted action at national and multilateral levels. The G20 Interfaith Forum has also highlighted, over several years, both the need for cooperation and action and the distinctive roles that religious actors can and should play as integrated members of global coalitions and partners of committed national governments. The challenges involved are magnified during the COVID-19 emergencies, which highlight a set of amplified or new corruption related issues. These include vaccine equity and effectiveness of vaccination campaigns and, the challenges involved with large and rapidly prepared financial assistance and other actions such as debt relief that demand effective mechanisms to guard against corruption and assure that benefits reach those most in need.

Addressing corruption is central to protecting human rights and human dignity, as it jeopardizes the functioning and legitimacy of political institutions and processes, economic development, and the rule of law. This is the foundation for religious engagement on the topic, alongside the direct knowledge that religious communities have of local impact and mechanisms of corruption, for example in health care and education. With wide variation in experience, religious communities have particular responsibilities and potential for action in the poorest and most vulnerable and fragile situations. Religious and faith traditions share teachings that speak to the core values of trust, righteousness and honesty; corrupt practices are considered shameful and reprehensible in light of their most fundamental beliefs and paradigms. There is potential for expanded action and cooperation by (a) building on ethical teachings to bolster effective action, (b) documenting the daily corrosive effects of corruption, (c) mobilizing communities in demanding public integrity, (d) encouraging accountability and transparency, and (e) serving as “watch-dogs” to expose and denounce corrupt actors and practices. Religious actors, however, need to meet several challenges that include limited accountability practices within many organizations, which contribute to sub-optimal engagement.

This brief highlights the need for G20 governments to engage with religious and other civil society communities in the specific context of the COVID-19 emergencies. It also distills the large body of operational and academic counsel as comprehensive recommendations covering public sector corruption, private company approaches and roles, specific actions to address the distinctive needs of vulnerable groups, the impact of new technologies on corruption, and civil society roles. It explores distinctive roles for faith communities and organizations with a view to enhancing engagement with G20 governments, leaders, and other bodies and engagement groups in the fight against corruption.