



**Multi-religious Faith in Action
COVID-19 Campaign
Briefing and Consultation with FBOs**

Friday, May 29, 2020, 9:00-10:00 am ET



Religions for Peace 

**JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

Attendees:

1. Alison Kelly, ACT Alliance, Rep to UN, NY
2. Imad Madanat, ADRA, VP Programs
3. Rachel Carnegie, Anglican Alliance
4. Rebeca Rios-Kohn, Arigatou International
5. Victor Mughogo and Steffie James, Eagles Relief and Development Programme
6. Abigail Nelson, Episcopal Relief & Development, Executive Vice President
7. Atallah FitzGibbon, Islamic Relief Worldwide
8. Jean Duff, Olivia Wilkinson, and Rima Alshawkani, Joint Learning Initiative
9. Robert Dawes, Mothers Union
10. Azza Karam, Deepika Singh, Sarah van Bentum, and Emma Jackson, Religions for Peace
11. Jimmy Otieno, ACRL-RfP
12. Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, Sarvadoya
13. Catriona Dejean, Tearfund, UK
14. Debra Boudreaux, Tzu Chi Foundation, CA
15. Kerida McDonald, Isabela Cunha, Austin Chu, Isabell Mckay-Smith, Snigdha Suvarna, Ivan Amezquita, Julianne Birungi, Ken Limwame, Sonia Sarkar, Johary Randimbivololona, UNICEF
16. Andrea Kaufmann and Bernard Okok, World Vision International
17. Sally Smith
18. Shanaz Deen

Regrets:

1. Thorsten Gobel, ACT Alliance
2. Bill O'Keefe, CRS
3. Janet Munn, The Salvation Army
4. Naureen Naqvi, UNICEF

Jean Duff, JLI, welcomed the participants, provided an overview of the agenda and the goal: To explore with global FBO networks **ways to strengthen the collaboration at the local level between religious leaders and faith communities, local FBOs and UNICEF country offices relating to COVID, in the overall context of the [FPCC Global Initiative](#) - [Multi-Religious Global Interfaith COVID-19 Initiative](#)**. Jean recognized the guidance and support of FBOs both as members of the FPCC Advisory Group in 2019 , and for the invaluable support provided by FBOs to local FBO partners to engage both in the 5 country WorkRocks in 2019 as well as the 7 regional webinars to launch the Multi-religious Faith in Action COVID 19 initiative.

Azza Karam, RfP, (noting that she was one of the JLI founders) called for strengthening of the tripartite collaboration among religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and UN based organizations not just at the global level but at a local level with national structures. This troika, or Trinity in the way we operate should not dissolve after COVID, but support UNICEF programming in the long term, and even beyond UNICEF to rest of UN - long term view eg. PARD, Moral initiative

Kerida McDonald and Deepika Singh together presented a detailed briefing on progress (see slides [here](#)), beginning with the Faith and Positive Change for Children global initiative on social and behavior change, providing an overview of the launch of the the Multi-religious Faith in Action COVID 19 initiative through the joint statement and call to action by UNICEF's Executive Director and RfPs top Religious Leaders, and an outline of the objectives and key strategies of the initiative including high level advocacy, joint social and behavioural evidence generation, a digital engagement strategy, development of global guidance, as well as monitoring and documentation. An account was provided on the global roll out of the initiative via 7 regional webinars with a summary provided of the key existing COVID-related initiatives being supported by Religious Leaders and Faith Communities; the main issues and challenges emerging and the key priorities and asks. The presentation concluded with a summary of proposed next steps including the development of joint country level Faith-in-Action plans.

Jean noted that 68 local representatives of FBO partners participated in the regional webinar launches and thanked them for their efforts to inform local partners on short notice. View the [FBO local participants](#)

Olivia Wilkinson briefed participants on the [Technical Guidance document for religious leaders](#) developed by JLI, and the thematic guidance documents developed collaboratively by JLI, UNICEF and RFP . Olivia recognized the generous support to this process from FBOs. View the [thematic docs slide](#).

Azza proposed the replication of a structure of the RFP-JLI-UNICEF FPCC advisory group at the national level. We are talking about an informal structure at the NATIONAL level that has: Religious Leaders FBOs, RfP IRCs + wider/other faith community members. This 'structure' would be tasked with the co-development and oversight of national plans of action etc, mirroring how we are here around this table working globally between UNICEF, RLs and FBOs, but a local/nationally based entity to work together with UNICEF CO. This NATIONAL tripartite structure would be seen by UNICEF as the Advisors cum implementers to this campaign cum programme. As it works with UNICEF, there is mutual learning on all sides - about collaboration beyond respective organizational territories. As the collaboration works well, and all members learn and deliver together, then this same structure can also work with other UN entities in the same countries. Azza said that the task for the group now is to seek to advise on populating such structures and have concrete deliverables expected of them.

The National coordination structures could:

- Include IRC and women of faith, and youth and re: the local counterparts of global FBOs.
- Develop a national plan of action with UNICEF – clear guidance re roles.
- UNICEF can then offer this structure to the rest of the UN system.
- Consolidation of the connections already begun.

Abigail Nelson, Episcopal Relief and Development, chaired the discussion following the briefing.

She remarked on ERD links to congregations via Anglican Church and the gathering at local levels in communities of practice and gave an example of a community of practice on children with disabilities.

Atallah FitzGibbon, Islamic Relief Worldwide, congratulated the efforts behind the initiative and noted that it is an amazing achievement and a huge step forward in history of engagement in humanitarian action. We need to address opportunities to avoid duplication – how can we ensure IRW supports this at the national level? Aspirations re:country roll-out and how to involve – IRW struggles to deal with connections to faith groups at national level. It is not normal for IRW teams to work with Religious Leaders. There is a need for agreed guidelines for this work. IRW pledges support and communication to regional coordinators around this initiative.

Rebeca Rios-Kohn, Arigatou International, mentioned the Global Network of Religions for Children – already engaging local faith actors and Religious Leaders re:children’s rights and suggested that the Faith-in-Action initiative consider how these efforts can be better aligned with these efforts including the World Day of Prayer in Action which already has strong traction including World Vision. She enquired about the possibility of UNICEF Country Offices providing some funding for local activities.

Rachel Carnegie, Anglican Alliance, remarked that this initiative is a fantastic step forward. The colleagues involved have appreciated the regional webinars, the desire to gather and collaborate has never been greater, particularly with the new imperative to provide support to communities during COVID. With regard to the proposal to create national level coordination plans Rachel suggested to try piloting in a limited number of countries. Develop criteria for inclusion. Who is included may vary according to local context.

Vinya Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya, gave an example of how Sarvodaya is working with UNICEF and local faith actors in COVID response.

Sally Smith extended congratulations on the initiative and remarked that it is exciting to see this take off at national level to formulate national action plans and go global. She noted that UNAIDS experience offers a model of collaboration between governments and faith communities, e.g. Kenya and Sierra Leone.

Jimmy Otieno, ACRL-RfP, stated that the activities to support collaboration between local FBOs and IRCs are timely, and will build on and expand ongoing partnerships.

Abigail Nelson summarized the key points of the discussion:

- In some pilot countries – explore guidelines
- Convening power of UNICEF
- Build on what is already in place - partnerships and structure
- Challenge of funding for inter-faith work

Kerida McDonald, UNICEF:

Noted the strong interest of the UNICEF ED which needs to be leveraged to its full potential.

UNICEF field presence with offices in every country offers a structure to build on. Specifically, in the context of Humanitarian Action, UNICEF Communication for Development plays a lead role in the Risk Communication and Community Engagement pillar and is servicing this function in relation to the Global COVID-19 Response. This will be a critical mechanism for linking the proposed inter-faith national plans.

Kerida responded that the initiative is intended to be inclusive and that UNICEF would be happy to explore possibilities for systematizing collaboration with FBOs including Arigatou.

Regarding funding for faith engagement and the national plans of action, she stated that given UNICEF's decentralized nature that funding possibilities would have to be discussed with each UNICEF Country office but stated that having a jointly developed plan of action would be an important instrument to bring attention and discussion on funding requirements.

Kerida suggested a reconstitution of an FPCC Advisory Group--revising TOR for this new context. It should be nimble and inclusive and honor the work that has gone before.

Kerida reminded everyone of the importance of a digital engagement strategy given the challenges of physical distancing and the need to leverage digital platforms for data collection on behavioural issues to make sure our communication strategies are evidence based. It is an area we can define together, what we hope to see, and laying the foundation for better work.

Deepika Singh, RfP, closed the session and thanked the participants for their attendance and their support for participation in the webinars which were well attended and valued.

Next Steps:

- FBOs to complete the survey re their interest and suggestions for ways to participate
- Once thematic guidance documents are finalized, support coordination of orientation and adaptation process for local contexts
- Link IRCs and FBOs to UNICEF country office to establish national action planning structures and prepare joint action plan
- Consider renewed global FBO advisory process linked to advisory groups at national level.

Partners who expressed interest in specific next steps:

- Andrea Kaufmann: World Vision would certainly be interested in participating in further consultation and exploration of next steps together.
- Debra Boudreaux: Buddhist Tzu Chi is willing to learn more and support more from here!
- Rebeca Rios-Kohn, Arigatou International: happy to continue to work together.
- Catriona Dejean, Tearfund: looking forward to hearing more and to seeing the slides.
- Alison Kelly, ACT Alliance: great to hear and look forward to taking back to ACT national forums for continuing coordination and engagement.
- Atallah Fitzgibbon - IRW pledges support and communication to regional coordinators around the initiative.