

Regional Webinar on Global Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action Initiative Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities

Background on the Initiative

Faith and Positive Change for Children is a global partnership between UNICEF, the world's largest inter-faith network **Religions for Peace** and knowledge partner JLI (**Joint Learning Initiative on Local Faith Communities** which begun in 2018 and was officially launched by RfP and UNICEF's Executive Director in Washington DC in October 2019. The central aim of the partnership is **to support positive social and behaviour change with and for children, parents and communities** with specific emphasis on going beyond simply delivering messages, to engaging faith communities in self-reflection, dialogue, exchange and feedback in order to achieve real and lasting positive change on jointly agreed priorities affecting children and their families. In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the FPCC partners have agreed to immediately shift focus of its joint work through a united Faith-in-Action campaign to respond to the crisis to provide more coordinated and evidence-based support for the protection and well-being of children and their communities. The initiative aims to mobilize Religious leaders, Women in Faith and Youth in Faith within RfP through its Inter-Faith Councils at country level to support COVID preparedness and response. The global campaign/initiative will promote and support 6 main actions:

- 1) **Development and release of national Inter-Faith/Faith messages by top-religious leaders to religious followers particularly around the holy days of Easter and Ramadan** to customize and reinforce the inter-faith position statements from highest level religious leaders in support of the campaign.
- 2) **Collection of information and establishment of monitoring mechanisms** to assess and track how religious institutions, beliefs, leaders, and practices are influencing positively and negatively in order to inform preparedness and response efforts and to more effectively address both the short term and long-term effects of the pandemic.
- 3) **Development, dissemination and local customization of Thematic Resource Guide** to provide information, practical tips and religious teachings on specific topics to guide the United Faith-in-Action efforts in support of parents and communities to be used and customized by the religious leaders. Some initial areas of focus will include: *Communication, misinformation, rumours; Dispelling fear, stigma, discrimination; Physical distancing, adaptations of religious gatherings and rituals, Handwashing and Hygiene; Support to specific vulnerable groups and to parents on preventing violence against Children and social solidarity.*
- 4) **Periodic Regional webinars** – to be coordinated by RFP and UNICEF HQ and Regional offices with interventions by selected religious leaders, Women of Faith and Youth in Faith and international experts coordinated country level **United Faith-in-Action campaign** to provide guidance, share good practice within the region and serve as a feedback mechanism.
- 5) **Digital and Mobile engagement** to exchange information and engage communities and young people in support of the campaign in the context of physical distancing. This will include dissemination of mobile versions of messages from the campaign Package on UNICEF's **Internet of Good Things (IOGT)**¹ and **leveraging of the U-Report platform by Faith Reporters**² and collection of information by these and other digital platforms to inform action.
- 6) **Tracking, monitoring and documentation of the results of the campaign** through regular reports and case stories from communities to country IRC focal points and through the Global FPCC website linked to the global RfP website.

Coordination Structure for the Campaign

The campaign will rely on the global Religions for Peace network. This comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than 90 national ones; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Interfaith Youth Network. On the side of Development partners, UNICEF will lead the coordination of campaign in close collaboration with WHO, IFRC, UNOHCR and other interested bodies. JLI in collaboration with UNICEF will coordinate the preparation of communication and mobilization package, drawing on inputs from UNICEF COVID materials for parents, youth and communities, RFP, and the Faith and COVID network JLI has established with Georgetown University. FPCC will also continue collaboration with its established Advisory Group of International FBOs including Islamic Relief Worldwide, Risho Kosei-Kai, World Vision, Jewish World Service, Episcopal relief and Development, Tearfund, Salvation Army, ACT Alliance, ADRA. These and other FBOs will both be consulted and actively engaged in the design and implementation of the campaign.

¹ The **Internet of Good Things (IOGT)** is a mobile-ready website developed by UNICEF which increases access to development-focussed and life-saving information for marginalized populations. Based on the IOGT free-data partnerships with Facebook and national MNO providers, as well as its design specifically for feature phones (not only Smart phones), the platform is bridging the digital divide to reach vulnerable populations with access to educational and lifesaving information in 13 national and local languages. The current potential reach of IOGT is 32 million.

² **U-Report** is an interactive SMS-based platform developed by UNICEF which engages more than 7 million adolescents, young people and community members across 60 countries in responding to polls and asking for and receiving tailored information. U-Report is a partner-led programme that works with over 350 distinct partners including governments, civil society, UN agencies, private sector, schools, universities and youth networks who engage to improve the impact of UNICEF and partner organisation's programme results.

Annex 1

The 18 commitments on "Faith for Rights": www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx

<p>1 ...to stand up and act for everyone's right to free choices, particularly for everyone's freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief</p>	<p>2 ...to use the declaration on "Faith for Rights" as a common minimum standard of interaction between theistic, non-theistic, atheistic or other believers</p>	<p>3 ...to promote constructive engagement on the understanding of religious texts through critical thinking and debate on religious matters</p>	<p>4 ...to prevent the notions of "State religion" and "doctrinal secularism" from being used to discriminate or reduce the space for diversity of religions and beliefs</p>	<p>5 ...to ensure non-discrimination and gender equality, particularly regarding harmful stereotypes and practices or gender-based violence</p>	<p>6 ...to stand up for the rights of all persons belonging to minorities and to defend their freedom of religion or belief, particularly in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life</p>	<p>7 ...to publicly denounce all instances of advocacy of hatred that incites to violence, discrimination or hostility in the name of religion or belief</p>	<p>8 ...to monitor our own interpretations, determinations or other religious views that manifestly conflict with universal human rights norms and standards</p>
<p>18 ...to use technological means more creatively and consistently in order to produce capacity-building and outreach tools and make them available for use at the local level</p>	<p>We commit...</p> <p>Faith for Rights</p>						<p>9 ...to condemn any judgemental public determination by any actor who in the name of religion disqualifies the religion or belief of another individual or community</p>
<p>17 ...to develop sustained partnerships with specialised academic institutions to promote interdisciplinary research, programs and tools on the implementation of the 18 commitments</p>	<p>16 ...to leverage the spiritual and moral weight of religions and beliefs in order to strengthen the protection of universal human rights and develop preventative strategies</p>	<p>15 ...not to coerce people in vulnerable situations into converting from their religion or belief, while fully respecting everyone's freedom to have, adopt or change a religion or belief</p>	<p>14 ...to ensure that humanitarian aid is given regardless of the recipients' creed and that aid will not be used to further a particular religious standpoint</p>	<p>13 ...to engage with children and youth, who are either victims of or vulnerable to incitement to violence in the name of religion</p>	<p>12 ...to review the curriculums and teaching materials wherever some religious interpretations seem to encourage or tolerate violence or discrimination</p>	<p>11 ...not to oppress critical voices on religious matters in the name of "sanctity", and to advocate for repealing any anti-blasphemy and anti-apostasy laws</p>	<p>10 ...not to tolerate exclusionary interpretations on religious grounds which instrumentalize religions, beliefs or their followers for electoral purposes or political gains</p>