



Religions for Peace 

JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Religions for Peace-UNICEF

Multi-Religious Faith- in- Action

Regional Webinar in Latin America

2020

Highlights/Summary Report

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



CONSEJO INTERRELIGIOSO
DE MÉXICO



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seven Regional Webinars to launch the Multi-religious Faith in Action COVID 19 Global Initiative #FaithinActionCOVID-19 | March-May 2020. See full Executive Summary of all webinars [here](#).

BACKGROUND

At the onset of the Global COVID pandemic in February 2020, the 3 main partners of the Global Initiative on **Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities** (FPCC) agreed to launch a multi-religious initiative to address the needs of families and communities in relation to the pandemic. FPCC is a partnership between Religions for Peace, UNICEF, and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI).

The #FaithinActionCOVID-19 initiative which was [launched](#) on April 7 by RfP, top religious leaders and UNICEF Executive Director released a joint statement and call-to-action to mobilize faith leaders for an on-going response to the global crisis precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The #FaithinActionCOVID-19 Initiative has outlined the following **7 main actions** as its core objectives:

1. Manage communication, misinformation, and rumors
2. Dispel fear, stigma, discrimination, reduce tensions and promote social harmony
3. Promote adaptation of religious gatherings, practices, rituals, handwashing, and hygiene
4. Address the specific needs of vulnerable groups
5. Promote the prevention of violence against children and women
6. Promote the participation and active engagement of children and young people
7. Promote and support the recovery of social services, resilience and return to normalcy

The Initiative also seeks to promote the wider FPCC goal of large scale **engagement of local multi-religious leaders**, their **faith communities** and **local FBOs**, in collaboration with **UNICEF country offices** through learning exchange, joint priority-setting and action planning, and mutual support.

REGIONAL WEBINARS

To rapidly connect with religious leaders, UNICEF country offices, FBOs, and other partners for briefing, consultation, and learning exchange, the Initiative organized a series of 7 regional webinars, aiming to:

- **Increase awareness** and strengthen **coordinated efforts** of the global Faith-in-Action Initiative,
- **Mobilize** and call to action inter-faith commitments of Religious Leaders and Faith representatives including Women of Faith and Interfaith Youth Network.
- **Equip** these influencers with a set of global guidance around the 7 main #Faith-in-Action objectives, including messages and resources that can be customized for local use.
- **Consult** with the religious leaders to learn about their existing efforts, understand their challenges and priorities for support.

Webinar Participants:

- RfP senior religious Leaders, members of regional and national IRCs, including Women of Faith, Interfaith Youth Networks, and district religious leaders
- Representatives from Ministries of Religious Affairs and other relevant Ministries
- National and local FBO affiliates and partners of international FBOs from the FPCC Advisory Group
- UNICEF technical leads from HQ, regional, country office and field offices
- WHO Regional representative
- Others at discretion of RfP

Over **700 participants** and **67 local partners** of international FBOs participated in the 7 Regional webinars. shared information about ongoing activities and good practice; listened to and asked questions about 3 thematic presentations; collectively identified key issues and challenges they were facing; and framed priority needs and asks of the Initiative's coordinating partners.

KEY ASKS & PRIORITIES

As a result of the webinars, several priority needs and asks will be supported as articulated by religious leaders, FBOs, and UNICEF staff:

- **Information dissemination** | assistance in content creation, framing appropriate messages that will balance science and religion, dissemination strategies, with particular focus on inclusion of technologically isolated, underrepresented and vulnerable groups.
- **Platform** | access to technical resources and outreach activities on a common platform.
- **Evidence gathering** | support in generating evidence from faith communities to inform communication strategies and inter-religious advocacy.
- **Vulnerable groups** | support for increased inclusion and participation of youth and women, religions that are not formally recognized, and advocacy and support on sexual and reproductive health.
- **Official Collaboration** | more systematic collaboration between sub-national and national levels and increased communication with the health sector.

Overarching and Strategic Asks

1. Desire to move beyond the global call to action and regional orientation to **concrete action on the ground at national and sub-national levels.**
2. Call for UNICEF as convener of a mechanism for systematic integration of the inter-faith constituency in global COVID-19 response. Specifically, formalizing a Troika (UNICEF, Inter-religious Councils and IFBOs) operating at global, regional, national and subnational levels.

ACTIONABLES

Resources

- Widely disseminate #FaithinAction resources, including thematic guidance presentation, technical resources.

Community

- Reach back to all regional webinar participants with package of materials and encourage widespread dissemination of the package to respective regional and local networks.
- Where possible support joint review and local adaptation of the Guidance.
- UNICEF and RfP co-hosting regular dialogue platform as a community information and feedback mechanism.
- Develop database of focal points within UNICEF, Inter-Religious Councils and FBOs (see Contacts Tab on website).
- Ensure inclusion of less-established faith and traditional groups.

Institutionalization

- Forge relationships between UNICEF and RfP entities at regional level.
- Support formation of country-level Inter-Faith Advisory Groups.
- Coordinate joint action planning and develop joint action plans.
- Ensure adherence to FPCC principles of participatory planning and non-instrumentalization of faith leaders.
- Support development of RfP-UNICEF Inter-Faith plans linked to country level Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) plans (and eventually the wider COVID-19 plans).
- Support development and implementation of a digital engagement strategy, engaging interfaith youth networks.
- Develop simple monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy, with indicators relating to the joint action and with reporting mechanism for the RCCE country plan.

KEY RESOURCES

- [Website: faith4positivechange.org](https://faith4positivechange.org)
- [Background to the Initiative](#)
- [Regional Webinar Reports](#)
- [Thematic guidance documents](#)
- [Resources on Faith & Positive Change](#)

Summary Report of the Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action Regional Webinar in LACRO (focus on Latin American, convened in Spanish)

Participants: *Religions for Peace* International, *Religions for Peace* Brazil, *Religions for Peace* Interreligious Council of Peru, Chilean Association of Interreligious Dialogue on Human Development (ADIR), Interreligious Council of Mexico (CIM), World Vision of Latin America and the Caribbean, COMIPAZ Argentina, Latin American Association of the Instituciones Metodistas Educativas (ALAIME), AIPRAL Brasil, OPS/OMS, Caritas Brazil, Caritas Peru, Islamic Charitable Association Colombia (AIC), Salvation Army- Latin American Northern Territory, Salvation Army-Chile, UNICEF HQ, UNICEF LACRO, UNICEF Venezuela, UNICEF Guatemala, UNICEF Brazil

Examples of Faith-in-Action Responses by Country/Organization

Brazil

- The country is in an acute political crisis situation, which is compounded by the lockdown situation.
- A number of conflicting messages have been given by diverse political forces which have created further confusion on social behavior among the larger public in response to the spread of COVID-19
- Need for a strong united interfaith voice to reach everyone irrespective of their religion.
- Support actions that are adopting new formats and provide psychosocial support for the larger public.
- Need a strong communication campaign through radio, television, and on digital platforms.
- Managing rumors and misinformation - Religious Leaders are sending out clear and accurate messages that abide by international health guidelines
- Increasing youth access to proper education - Radios are being distributed children who don't have internet access so they can continue with virtual learning
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Peru

- An interfaith committee for addressing immigrants and refugees must be established.
- The most vulnerable families need to be identified, 70% of the population depend on the informal sector
- The health system is extremely stretched and on the point of collapse.
- There is a need to focus on the prevention of sexual exploitation of children which is on the rise in the pandemic
- Elizabeth Carrera: 'Yo estoy tu eres'

The Ubuntu says – Highlights the inter-dependency which the COVID-19 situation mandates. There is an anthropological rule of Ubuntu stating ‘You are if I am’. It highlights the need for self-care and for caring for those around us. We need to support health workers, provide them with spiritual support to complete their work. Woman of Faith network)

- Discussed how as a pastor she used video and other forms of social media to reach out to children, young people when the lock-down happened. (Pablo Jimenez, WHO)
- Highlighted the need for social support, pastoral support, speak up for and protect vulnerable populations (please refer to detailed presentation). (Pedro World Vision, Venezuela)
- Highlighted the need to focus on the most vulnerable groups such as migrants from neighboring countries. The need to use the internet and radio amongst these groups in order to create awareness is important.
- Refugee Asylum - Inter-religious Council of Peru is helping ~8,000 Venezuelan refugees to seek asylum while providing essential emergency response items

Main Issues and Challenges

- Need for guidance on how to support families and especially children who are grieving for the loss of a family member. Guidance on the adaption of rituals is needed.
- Guidance on how to share grief under physical distancing regulations, when for example a family member has passed and other family members cannot be near to support.

Priority Needs and Asks of UNICEF

- How to speak of changed religious practices and rituals in areas where there is no or limited reach of television or radio?
- How should you address communities that do not allow dead bodies to be buried in their vicinity (e.g. Honduras)?
- How can we empathize with people who have experienced violence, or those who are suffering from hunger?
- Most religious leaders can facilitate open, free and culturally nuanced communication. Often vulnerable people do not have access to the internet, which emphasizes the need to use the radio as a means of communication. In some cases, education can be provided through public television.
- An example of how religious communities use radio stations donated from Argentina, with access to the Catholic Radio Maria, which provides extensive outreach and communications possibilities. Request to share a list of religious radio stations that may exist in other countries.
- Need for more religious intervention in Brazil - Brazil is a religious country in need of focused leveraging of the religious leaders’ influence